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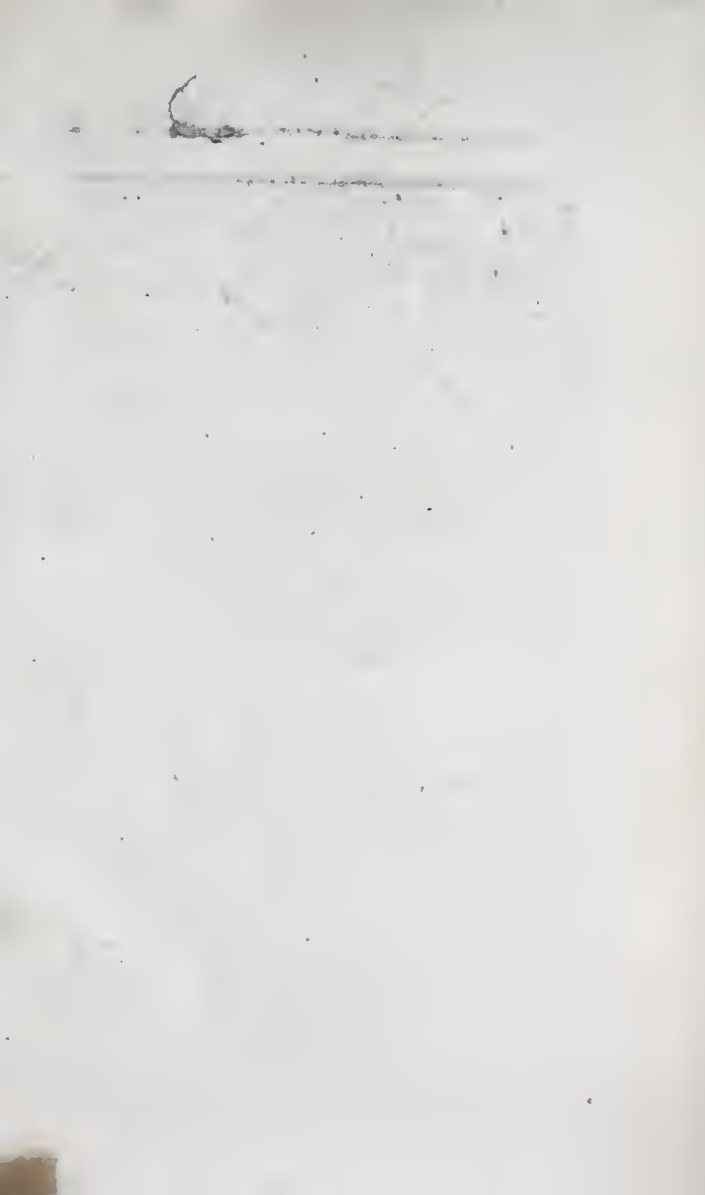
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# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

FROM THE

CREATION OF THE WORLD

TO THE

DECEASE OF GEORGE III., 1820.

BY THE

HON. ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER,

AND

REV EDWARD NARES, D.D.

EDITED BY AN AMERICAN.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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# UNIVERSAL HISTORY.

## BOOK THE FOURTH.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### Roman Philosophy—Public and Private Manners.

IN the present Chapter, I shall consider, in the first place, the state of philosophy among the Romans, and afterward proceed to the subject of their public and private manners. In the early ages of the republic, the Romans, occupied in continual wars with the states of Italy, or, in the short intervals of respite from these, engrossed in their domestic dissensions, had little leisure to bestow on the cultivation of the sciences, and had no idea of philosophical speculation. It was not till the end of the sixth century, after the building of the city, and in the interval between the war with Perseus of Macedon and the third Punic war, that philosophy made its first appearance at Rome. A number of Achæians, banished from their native country, had settled in Italy. Part of these, among whom were some men of talents and learning, particularly Polybius the Megalopolitan, took up their abode at Rome, and applying themselves there to the pursuit of letters and the education of the Roman youth, soon diffused a relish for these studies hitherto un-

known to the rising republic. This new taste was, as I have hinted at in the former chapter, very unfavourably regarded by the older citizens. The senators, who lived in a perpetual struggle with a people jealous of their civil rights, were in no measure disposed to encourage philosophical disquisitions on the origin of government, on the foundation of liberty and the natural rights of mankind. To repress, therefore, such dangerous studies, this body passed a decree, banishing those foreign philosophers from their city. This, however, was an ineffectual remedy. The passion for literature may perhaps be cherished by political encouragements, but once roused it is not easily extinguished by political restraints. A few years after this, Carneades and Critolaus arrived in an Athenian embassy at Rome; the discourses of these philosophers added new strength and vigour to that taste whose first efforts the Roman senate had in vain attempted to extinguish, and the Greek philosophy soon became as generally relished in this era of the republic, as during its earliest ages it had been either unknown or despised.

It was natural that, in the choice among the different systems which the several sects or schools of Greek philosophy presented, those tenets should be most favourably received and most generally adopted, which accorded most with the national character and genius of the people. The Romans had not yet shaken off the severity of ancient manners, and the doctrines of the Stoical philosophy were, therefore, most nearly allied to their own previous conceptions of morality. The philosophy of Aristotle was in truth little known in Rome till the age of Cicero. Cratippus then taught his system with great reputation, though that unnecessarily tedious and complicated mode of reasoning adopted by this philosopher does not appear ever to have had a numerous party to support it. Lucullus, whose stay in Greece afforded him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the doctrines of



all the different schools, at his return to Rome disseminated a very general taste for philosophising. He does not, indeed, appear to have attached himself exclusively to the tenets of any particular sect. If he had a preference for any, it was for that of Plato. The philosophy of the New Academy, which professed to teach the art of defending all opinions, would necessarily find its partisans among the lawyers and orators. Cicero, if he professed any settled system at all, (a point which his philosophical writings leave very enigmatical,) seems most attached to this.

The truth probably is, that, in his philosophical works, his general purpose was to give rather a history of the ancient philosophy, than any defence or exposition of his own peculiar opinions; to explain to his countrymen in their own language whatever the philosophers of all sects and all ages had taught, with a view toward the enlargement of their understanding, and the improving of their morals. This he declares to be his purpose in his "Treatise de Finibus," in that *De Natura Deorum*, in his "Tusculan Disputations," and in his book on the Academic Philosophy. As to physics, or natural philosophy, Cicero seems to have entertained the same opinion with Socrates—that a minute and particular attention to these inquiries was a study rather curious than useful, and contributing but little to the real benefit of mankind—a very extraordinary idea, but which seems to have been prevalent with most of the ancient philosophers, if we except Aristotle and the elder Pliny. It was reserved for our own country, in a future and more enlightened age of the world, to lay, in this severe and critical examination of Nature, which was then so much despised, the solid basis of all true and genuine philosophy. Of the writings and principles of Aristotle, a particular account has been given in treating of the progress of philosophy among the Greeks. Nothing need here be added upon this subject. The elder Pliny, whose books on natural history still remain en-

tire, was perhaps one of the most extraordinary literary phenomena that ever existed in the world. In one of the letters of his nephew, Pliny the younger, there is an account given of the studies, and a description of the manner of life of this singular man, which, as it is extremely curious, I shall easily be excused for inserting.

“ You admire,” says Pliny to Macer, “ the works of my uncle, and wish to have a complete collection of them ; I will point out to you the order in which they were composed : for, however immaterial that may seem, it is a sort of information not at all unacceptable to men of letters. The first book he published was a treatise concerning the Art of throwing the Javelin on Horseback. This he wrote when he commanded a troop of horse, and it is drawn up with great accuracy and judgment. He next published the Life of Pomponius Secundus, in two books, and, after that, the History of the Wars in Germany, in twenty books, in which he gave an account of all the battles we had been engaged in against that nation ; and a Treatise upon Eloquence, divided into six books. In this work he takes the orator from his cradle, and leads him up till he has carried him to the highest point of perfection in his art. In the latter part of Nero’s reign, when the tyranny of the times made it dangerous to engage in any studies of a more free and elevated nature, he published a piece of criticism in eight books, concerning Ambiguity in Expression. He completed the history which Aufidius Bassus left unfinished, and added to it thirty books ; and lastly, he has left thirty-seven books of natural history, a work of great compass and learning, and almost as various as Nature herself. You will wonder how a man so engaged as he was could find time to compose so many books ; but your surprise will rise still higher when you hear, that for some time he engaged in the profession of an advocate ; that he died in his fifty-sixth year ; and that from the time of his quitting the bar till his

death, he was employed in the execution of the highest employments, and in the service of his prince. But he had a quick apprehension, joined to unwearied application. Before day-break he used to wait upon Vespasian, who, like him, chose that time to transact his business. When he had finished the affairs which the emperor committed to his charge, he returned home to his studies. After a short repast at noon, he would repose himself in the sun, during which time, some author was read to him, from which, according to his constant custom, he made extracts and observations. When this was over, he generally took the cold bath, after that, a slight refreshment, and then reposed himself a little. Then, as if beginning a new day, he immediately resumed his studies till supper time, during which, a book was commonly read to him, upon which he would make occasional remarks. In summer, he rose from supper by day-light, and in winter, as soon as it was dark. Such was his manner of life, amid the hurry and noise of the town; but, in the country, his whole time was devoted to study without intermission, excepting when in the bath, for even when undressing, and when he was rubbed by his servants, he was either listening to a reader or dictating himself. A secretary constantly attended him in his chariot. I remember he once reproved me for walking. 'You might,' says he, 'employ those hours to more advantage,' for he thought all time was lost that was not given to study. By this extraordinary application, he found time to write so many volumes. I cannot but smile," continues the younger Pliny, "when I hear myself called a studious man, who, in comparison to him, am a mere loiterer. But why do I mention myself, who am diverted from these pursuits by numberless affairs both public and private? Even they whose whole lives are engaged in study must blush when placed in the same view with him."

This picture of the manner of life pursued by the

elder Pliny will be allowed by all to be a very singular one, but it is too inconsistent with the ordinary powers of man to serve as a model of imitation. It will appear also from this, that Pliny was infinitely more studious of storing his mind with the opinions of others than to form opinions of his own; for one who is constantly employed either in listening to a reader or in dictating to an amanuensis, cannot possibly give sufficient exercise either to his judgment or his invention. And this, indeed, appears to have been the case with Pliny, if we may judge from the only work of his remaining, *The Books of Natural History*, which is, indeed, little else than a most voluminous compilation from the works of Varro, the elder Cato, Hyginus, Pomponius Mela, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Herodotus, and other writers—a work valuable, no doubt, as containing an immense treasury of the knowledge of the ancients, but filled with discordant and contradictory opinions, and indicating, on the whole, no original genius in the compiler.

It was above remarked that, when philosophy first made its way from Greece to Rome, the doctrines of the Stoical school were then chiefly prevalent in the republic. With a people who were only emerging from a simplicity, or rather a severity of manners, it is not probable that the system of Epicurus would find a very favourable reception. As luxury, however, advanced, and corruption of manners began to undermine the strictness of the ancient morality, it also found its votaries. This change in the Roman manners it may not be uninteresting to consider somewhat minutely.

The picture of the Roman people during the first five centuries is so perfectly distinct, so widely different from what we find it in the latter ages of the republic, that we might at first be induced to think that some very extraordinary causes must have co-operated to produce so total an alteration. Yet the transition was easy and natural, and was in the Roman people

the necessity and inevitable consequence of that rich and luxurious situation in which the virtuous and heroic temper of the earlier times had conduced to place the republic. A spirit of temperance, of frugality, and of industry must be the characteristics of every infant colony. The poverty of the first Romans, the narrow territory to which they were limited, made it necessary for every citizen to labour for his subsistence. In the first ages, the patricians, when in the country, forgot all the distinctions of rank, and toiled daily in the fields like the lowest plebeian. Examples of this are familiar to every reader. Cincinnatus we have seen named dictator by the voice of his country, while at the plough. M. Curius, after expelling Pyrrhus from Italy, retired to the possession of a small farm, which he assiduously cultivated. The elder Cato was fond of this spot, and revered it on account of its former master. It was in emulation of the example of this ancient Roman that Cato betook himself to agriculture. Scipio Africanus also, after the conquest of Hannibal and the reduction of Carthage, retired to his paternal fields, and with his own hand reared and grafted his fruit-trees. If such was the conduct and example of the highest magistrates and most eminent men in the state, what idea must we form of the manners and customs of the inferior ranks?

In times of peace and tranquillity, most of the citizens, employed at their small farms, visited the town only every ninth or market day. There they provided themselves with necessaries for the week, and took their share in the public business of the commonwealth at the comitia. It was on these market-days that the tribunes harangued the people, and it was then that those men—employed for their daily occupation in labouring and husbandry—feeling their weight in the public deliberations, learned to know their own importance in the state, which was in no respect diminished by the necessary cares and duties to which, in those



happy and primitive ages, custom had annexed respect and honour instead of meanness or reproach.

Thus simple were the occupations and, of consequence, the manners of the ancient Romans. Employed either in their warlike expeditions, or, when at peace, in the frugal, laborious, and innocent avocations of a country life, it was to be expected, as a necessary result, that industry and a virtuous simplicity of manners should be the principal features in the character of a people so situated. "*Domī militiæque*," says Sallust, "*boni mores colebantur—jūs bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam naturâ valebat: duabus artibus, audaciâ in bello, ubi pax evenerat æquitate, seque rempublicam curabant.*"\* But this very discipline, and those manners which paved the way for the extension of the Roman arms, and for the conquest of the surrounding empires, became, of consequence, the remote cause of the corruption of the manners of the people in the later ages of the republic, and the introduction of that luxurious and effeminate spirit from which it is not difficult to deduce the ruin and downfall of the commonwealth. When, after the second Punic war, they had pushed their conquests into Asia, and in the third Punic war accomplished the subversion of Carthage, and acquired the unlimited sovereignty of Greece, then it necessarily happened that, losing their ancient manners with their ancient poverty, possessed of wealth, and adopting with a willing servility the customs of the nations they subdued, the Romans became as vicious, as luxurious, and as effeminate as they had before been remarkable for their virtue, their industry, and their rigid simplicity of manners. They appeared now to be actuated by a new spirit, but chiefly by an affectation of taste in the fine

\* Whether at home, or engaged in war, they cultivated good morals; that which is just and good was of authority with them no less from its own nature, than because it was commanded by the laws. By two virtues, courage in war, and equity in peace, they preserved themselves and the republic.

arts, in which nature certainly had never qualified them to make any decided or eminent progress. The faculty to excel in these requires not only a predisposition of nature, an inherent acuteness of perception of what is beautiful, but also an intimate acquaintance with the objects of taste, and a long habit of exercising the judgment exclusively upon them. Of this natural predisposition to the fine arts the Romans never evinced any traces. On the contrary, even in the periods of their greatest refinement, we hear not of the excellence of a single painter, sculptor, or architect; nor did they indeed possess, until their conquest of Greece, any acquaintance with those exalted specimens of art upon which a corrected and chastened taste could alone have been formed. At that period, indeed, an immense field was at once opened to their view. The master-pieces of art poured in upon them; but these they did not possess the talents to appreciate. The extravagances of glare and show were more suited to their judgment, and possessed more attractive beauties to their unpractised eyes; and it is natural, therefore, to conclude that the Roman luxury, so far as the fine arts were concerned, could only manifest itself in an awkward, heavy, and tasteless magnificence.

In order to give some idea of the manners of the Romans after they had undergone this remarkable change, or rather toward the end of the commonwealth, at a time when the extravagance of general luxury was felt throughout the whole body politic, and to point out also some customs which were peculiarly characteristic of this people, it may not be improper shortly to describe the manner in which the day was spent at Rome, as well by the lower as by the higher and more idle classes of the citizens. Extraordinary as it may appear to us, it is certain that the Romans were, for nearly five centuries, utterly ignorant of the division of the day by hours, and knew no other distinction but that of morning, mid-day, and evening. The laws of the Twelve Tables divided the

day into two portions only, *ortus et occasus*, (the rising and the setting of the sun); nor was it until a considerable time after that they added a third division, *merides* (mid-day). We are informed by Pliny the naturalist, that till the 477th year of Rome, when Papirius Cursor caused the first sun-dial to be put up on the wall of the temple of Quirinus, they had never used any method of measuring time; that Valerius Messala brought another from Catania, in Sicily, and that these two, although very inaccurate in dividing time, continued to be the only regulators of the day at Rome for nearly a century, till Scipio Nasica introduced the water-clock, which showed the hours both of the day and night.

The first, second, and third hours were differently employed at Rome by the different ranks of the people; and even by these differently according to their separate inclinations. It was the custom with many to begin the day by visiting the temples, where, according as their ideas of devotion were more or less strict, they either sacrificed, or paid their adoration by simply kissing their hand, or prostrating themselves before their own particular deity. Those who were more rigorously devout made their conscientious circuit to most of the temples in the city, a business which must necessarily have occupied many hours; but the great bulk of the citizens, attached to temporal concerns, and intent on more substantial duties, employed the morning very differently. The *Patroni*, (Patrons), were attended by all their *Clientes* (Clients.) The great had their levees, at which either their inferiors who wished to recommend themselves to their protection, or even their equals who courted their favour and friendship, crowded in the morning to pay their compliments. Pompey did not think it beneath him to appear at the levee of Cicero. The custom was to wait in the vestibule or ante-chamber, till the great man made his appearance; to pay him some compliment, couched either in wishes for his



health or panegyric on his talents, or congratulation on any promotion which might have occurred, and afterward to accompany him—either walking in his train, or attending by the side of his litter—to the senate-house, or to the forum, and thence to reconduct him home.

The lower ranks and the more servile and parasitical courtiers, who had many such visits to pay, must have necessarily begun very early in the morning. Juvenal humorously describes them as setting out by star-light, and does not even give them time to tie their garters.

These visits Pliny calls *ante-lucana officia*. They were sometimes so troublesome to the great man to whom they were paid, that it was not unusual for him to go out by a back door, and so give his visitors the slip. Horace, in his fifth epistle, playfully advises his friend Torquatus to escape the importunities of his clients by this sinister expedient:—

“rebus omissis,  
Atria servantem postico falle clientem.”\*

This liberty, however, we may rest assured, was not very often taken; for if, as we have above seen, the expedients of those ancient courtiers, who in these remote times solicited the patronage of the great in Rome, were in few respects different from that watchful and attentive assiduity which still distinguishes the same classes among ourselves, we may rely also that the great in Rome were no less ambitious of receiving these marks of distinction, than the powerful in this country. Popularity was there, indeed, always the first object of ambition; and when the great man made the tour of his circle at the levee, he was not, we may be assured, the least complaisant of his com-

\* “Putting aside your business, give your client the slip by the back door, while he is waiting in the ante-chamber.”

pany. And, indeed, in the latter ages of the republic it was not enough for the great to show their affability by an empty salute or a simple squeeze of the hand, the courtiers were then accustomed to expect more substantial marks of their favour, and thought themselves ill used if they were not regaled with a breakfast of the most delicate viands, or repaid for their attendance by a present or a piece of money.

From the levee they next proceeded to the tribunal or to the forum—some, as concerned there either in the private or public business, others for amusement to hear what was going on. There the time was spent till noon, which among the Romans was the hour of dinner, chiefly a very light repast, and of which it was not customary to invite any guests to partake. After dinner the youth repaired to the Campus Martius, and spent the hours till sunset in a variety of sports and athletic exercises. The elder class retired for an hour to repose, and then passed the afternoon in their porticoes or galleries which, in the house of every man of rank, formed a conspicuous part of the building. Many of these were open to the air, supported on pillars of stone or marble, under which they enjoyed the exercise of walking, and sometimes of being carried in their litters. Other galleries were sheltered from the air, and lighted by windows of a transparent talc or lapis specularis which supplied the place of glass.\* These covered galleries were ornamented in the richest manner, and with the most expensive decorations—gilded roofs, paintings on the walls, and statues in the niches;—and adjoining to them were their libraries, which in the latter days of the republic became an article of great expense, and

\* “*Hibernis objecta notis specularia, puros  
Admittunt soles, et sine fæce diem.*”—*Martial*.

‘Windows of transparent tale, excluding the winter south winds, admit the pure rays of the sun—a mild and clear light without glare.’

on the furnishing of which the higher classes used particularly to pique themselves. The sumptuous Lucullus exceeded all his contemporaries in this, as indeed in every other species of luxury. His library was more extensive than that of any other private citizen, and the use he made of it more noble. His porticoes, the halls where his books were arranged, and his gardens with which they communicated, were all open to the public. Strangers were more particularly welcomed, and his house, Plutarch informs us, became the asylum and the prytaneum of all the Greeks at Rome. In these galleries the master of the house amused himself in the evening in conversations with his guests, or in sports with his friends. There likewise the poets came to recite their works, although this practice was probably confined to the most ostentatious or the most needy, who in this way attempted to recommend themselves to a patron. "Non recito cuiquam," says Horace "nisi amicis, idque coactus."\*

The houses of private citizens, and even of those of the higher classes, were of a very moderate size during the times of the republic. The Romans appear to have lived much in the open air, as a great part of their buildings consisted of vestibules and porticoes. The houses were detached from each other, and usually of one floor. The different apartments had each a single door, entering from the gallery or portico. These apartments, except the *triclinium* or hall, where they sat at meals, were generally small, and lighted only by one square window near the ceilings. The furniture of the house and its decorations were simple, the walls ornamented with fresco painting in a light and cheerful style. The larger houses had each a garden behind for the cultivation of vegetables, and a few trees to yield a refreshing shade in summer.

This luxury of walking and amusing themselves

\* "I recite to none except my friends ; nor to them unless I am compelled."

under cover was not long confined to the rich and the powerful. These, to increase their popularity, built porticoes for the use of the public, and contended with each other in bestowing on them the most expensive adornments. In these porticoes all classes were to be found amusing themselves. Indeed idleness and luxury, toward the end of the republic, characterized equally the richer and the poorer citizens. They had approached that period so necessarily incident to every wealthy and overgrown state, when industry becomes a reproach, and amusement forms the engrossing object of life.

The passion for public games and magnificent spectacles constituted, at this period, a very striking feature in the Roman character. The shows of the amphitheatre rose naturally out of that taste for martial exercises, which we find in the first ages of every warlike people. About the 490th year of Rome, Marcus and Decimus Brutus presented a combat of gladiators for the first time at Rome. About a century after that period the athletæ were introduced for a public show; and there were combats of slaves with bears and lions. Sylla, during his prætorship, exhibited a combat where a hundred men fought with a hundred lions; and Julius Cæsar, during his ædileship, presented a show where there fought three hundred couples of gladiators.\* It is astonishing to what a height the passion for these bloody entertainments was carried; and what is very remarkable was, that the spirit of luxury, which is in general found rather favourable to humanity, or at the least productive of a refinement of man-

\* Dion Cassius, in speaking of Pompey's shows, in which above five hundred lions were killed, besides elephants and other wild beasts, tells us it was a miserable spectacle, even to the populace, who were affected by the mournful cries of these poor animals (Dion, b. xxxix.); and Cicero broadly condemns those inhuman spectacles, as in his time affording no delight to the mob who gazed upon them.—*Cicero, Epist. ad Familiares*, b. vii. Epist. i.

ners, among the Roman people, on the contrary, was marked by an increasing and unnatural ferocity in the public amusements—a circumstance not unworthy of attention from those who, in the present day, are advocates for those public fighting matches, which, in point of brutality, are, perhaps, little inferior to the more mortal combats at Rome.

The Lanistæ, whose business it was to instruct these gladiators in their profession, taught them not only the use of their arms, but likewise the most graceful postures of falling when they were wounded, and the finest attitudes of dying in. The food of these unfortunate victims was likewise prescribed to them, and was of such a nature as to enrich and thicken the blood, so that it might flow more leisurely through their wounds, and thus the spectators might be the longer gratified with the sight of their agonies. These miserable beings were also accustomed on entering their profession, to take an oath, of which the form has been preserved to us in a fragment of Petronius. "*In verba Eumolpi juravimus, uri, vinciri, verberari, ferroque necari, et quicquid aliud Eumolpus jussisset tanquam legitimi gladiatores domino, corpora animosque religiosissime addicimus*"—i. e. "We swear that we will suffer ourselves to be bound, scourged, burnt, or killed by the sword, or whatever else Eumolpus ordains, and thus, like freeborn gladiators, we religiously devote both soul and body to our master." Is it not dreadful that human nature should ever have been reduced to such a state of degrading and incomprehensible barbarity?

In a former chapter, on the progress of literature among the Romans, the entertainments of the theatre were discussed at some length, but among these entertainments none during the later periods of the commonwealth became so popular as the taste for pantomime. Schools were instituted where this art was publicly taught, and these, we read, were often more frequented by the younger patricians than the lectures



of the orators. A decree of the senate was found necessary to prohibit its members from attending these indecent assemblies, and discharging all of the equestrian order from publicly courting and encouraging the performers of pantomime. We may conceive to what a pitch of degeneracy the public manners had arrived when we read that the affairs of the state were interrupted, and the minds of its ministers embroiled, by the contentions of the different parties who supported each their favourite actors, and that, on this account, it was more than once found necessary to expel them from the city.

Following the Romans through the ordinary occupations of the day, it was customary for them to go from the porticoes or the theatre to take the bath. Water, which, in the more frugal days of the republic, was used only for the necessary purposes of life, was not brought to Rome by aqueducts till the 441st year of the city. It was till that time drawn from the Tiber, or from wells in the town. But it soon became one of the chief articles of luxury, to supply as well the public as the private baths, and many aqueducts were accordingly built, and public reservoirs and fountains reared in every quarter of the city. This luxury increased to such a degree that, under Augustus, there were seven hundred basins, a hundred and five fountains, and a hundred and thirty public reservoirs, all adorned in the most sumptuous manner with columns, statues, and basso-relievoes. To superintend these, became an office of considerable dignity and emolument, and under the emperors was filled mostly by men of the first rank.

The practice of taking the cold bath was in early use at Rome, where the heat of the climate and the fatigue attending the athletic exercises made it requisite alike for the purposes of cleanliness and comfort. It was not till pretty late in the republic that the hot baths began to be introduced; but at last it became customary for all to take the warm bath before sit-

ting down to supper. The rich had their baths in their own houses, in which, as in every other thing, they vied with each other in expense and magnificence. Seneca, when he speaks of this piece of luxury, tells us his countrymen disdained to set their feet on anything but precious stones; and Pliny wishes old *Fabricius* alive, to witness the degeneracy of his posterity, whose seats in their private baths were made of solid silver. Under the later emperors, indeed, this luxury appears to have been carried to an almost incredible excess. The public baths built by Augustus, by Dioclesian, and by Caracalla, were sumptuous beyond description. These were open to all the citizens, who, for a trifling gratuity, had slaves to attend on them, to assist them in undressing, and to rub their bodies with flesh-brushes. The baths of Dioclesian were so large that they could accommodate three thousand persons bathing at the same time. They were adorned with columns of the finest marble, and decorated with a profusion of statues and of paintings. They consisted of a variety of apartments destined not only for the purposes of bathing, but for various amusements, and even for literary and philosophic exercises. There were public libraries adjoining to the baths, halls of resort for the studious or for the idle, who met to talk over the news of the day; and to these also the poets resorted, as we have observed they did to the porticoes, to recite their compositions.

In the houses of the great, the bath was used immediately before they went to supper; and they came from the bath to the table in a loose sort of robe called, from its use, *convivialis* or *triclinaria*. It was customary for them to sup between the ninth and tenth hours, which, when the sun rose at six, would correspond with our three or four in the afternoon, and at a proportional distance from sunset, as the days were longer or shorter. They must, therefore, have always sat down to supper with daylight, and indeed

Vitruvius directs the supper-room to be constructed in such a manner that it shall have its aspect to the setting sun: "Hyberna triclinia recedentem solem spectare debent," lib. vi. c. 5; but they often, however early their hour of commencement, prolonged the entertainment through most of the night.

It is singular that, as with us moderns, luxury has thrown the meals much later than they were in the more frugal days of our ancestors, the same cause was attended with very contrary effects at Rome. In the early ages of the commonwealth, when daylight was valuable for the purposes of labour and industry, the citizens did not sup till sunset; but, in the more advanced periods of the Roman state, when the luxury of the table became one of the most serious concerns in life, it was found necessary to begin early, that time might not be found wanting for such important concerns. The custom of reclining on couches came not into use till the end of the sixth century, and for some time after it was adopted by the men, the Roman ladies, from motives of decency, continued to sit upright at table; but these scruples were soon removed, and all promiscuously adopted the recumbent posture, except the youth who had not yet attained the age of putting on the manly robe. They sat in a respectful posture at the bottom of the couch.

These couches were ranged along three sides of a square table, which was then called *triclinium*, as was likewise the chamber itself in which they supped. The fourth side of the table remained open for the servants to place and remove the dishes. Above was a large canopy of cloth suspended by the corners, to prevent the company being incommoded with dust. It was this custom that enables Horace to introduce a ludicrous accident, which he describes as occurring at a supper given by the niggardly, but ostentatious Nasidienus to Mecænas, and some other courtiers. While the landlord is enlarging on the praises of a favourite dish, and discussing the merits of the com-



ponent ingredients of the sauce, the canopy falls down and involves everything, host, guest, supper, and dishes, in a cloud of dust and darkness.

“Interea suspensa graves aulæa ruinas  
In patinam fecere trahentia pulveris atri  
Quantum non Aquilo Campanis excitat agris.”\*

B. ii. Sat. 8.

Every feast was attended with a certain mixture of religious ceremony. It began and concluded with a libation to the gods. In barbarous nations we know there was ever a strong affinity between a repast and a sacrifice. The offerings to the gods consisted of what men esteemed always their choicest food, and the priests, as the ministers of the gods, ate the sacrifice. The practice of libation, also, was of the highest antiquity. It was universal both among the Greeks and Romans; and the idea of the meal being a religious ceremony, both with regard to the libations of wine and the offerings of the meat to the priests, showed itself in several other particulars. It was esteemed a most solemn obligation, if a person, laying his hand upon the table, should pronounce an oath. The *triclinium* was looked upon as an altar. The salt was also held sacred, and it was regarded as an unfavourable omen should it be spilt or overturned. It was customary, also, to place upon the table small *images* or *penates*—*Genii mensæ præsidēs* (the presiding genii of the feast), or *epitrapetii*, as they were called, to whose honour it was chiefly that the libation was performed. These religious notions had this good effect, that, amid all their intemperance, the Romans accounted it a species of sacrilege to allow a quarrel or an animosity at table, and the height of

\* In the time of Seneca, their halls of banquet were constructed with moveable roofs, adorned with paintings, so that the ceiling was made to change along with the different courses. “Versatilia cœnationum laquearia ita coaugmentat ut subinde alia facies atque alia succedat, et toties tecta quoties fercula mutantur.”—*Seneca*, Epist. 90.

impiety to commit any violence or outrage. But these religious ideas could be only felt by a moderate and a virtuous people. When luxury had once spread its contagion, as was too certainly the case before the end of the republic, a few traces may remain in customs and ceremonies, but these can only be considered as the shadows of ancient virtue, after the substance had long perished. Such was the case with regard to the ceremonies we have mentioned. They still continued in observance after luxury and debauchery had reached their utmost height; but all those ideas of religion which had been interwoven with them were gone for ever.

It would be a task at once disagreeable and unprofitable to describe minutely those excesses which are painted in the strongest and often the most disgusting colours by the ancient writers, both satirists and historians, or to dwell on the intemperance of those degraded times when, as Livy tells us, "a cook, who by their frugal ancestors was looked upon as the vilest and meanest of slaves, was considered as an officer of high importance, and that trade dignified by the name of an art, which before was regarded as the most servile drudgery."

It was a general custom, in preparing for a luxurious meal, to take a vomit a short time before sitting down to table. This was not regarded as a mark either of gluttony or epicurism, but was held to be done in compliment to the entertainer, that his guests might be enabled to carry off a greater quantity of his good fare. When Julius Cæsar paid a visit of reconciliation to Cicero by inviting himself to sup with him, he took care to let Cicero know that he had taken a vomit before hand, and was resolved to make a most enormous meal—and Cicero tells us he kept his word, which, for his own part, he took very kindly, and as a mark of Cæsar's high politeness. (Cic. Epist. ad Attic. 13, 52.)

Compared with that of the Romans, the luxury of

the moderns would scarcely deserve the name of intemperance. Before the principal meal was placed on the table, it was customary to present an *antecæni*um or collation, which consisted of pickles and spices, to provoke and sharpen the appetite. The thirst excited by this prelude to more serious occupation was allayed by a mixture of wine and honey, which they termed *promulsio*, and the stomach being thus prepared, the supper itself was presented, after a short interval. The expense ridiculously bestowed on these entertainments, and the labour employed in collecting the rarest and most costly articles of food, exceed all belief. In this, as indeed in every other species of luxury, there was the most capricious refinement of extravagance. Suetonius mentions a supper given to Vitellius by his brother, in which, among other articles, there were two thousand of the choicest fishes (*lectissimorum piscium*), seven thousand of the most delicate birds—one dish, from its size and capacity, was named the *ægis* or *shield of Minerva*. It was filled chiefly with the livers of *scari* (a delicate species of fish), the brains of pheasants and peacocks, the tongues of parrots (imagined, probably, to be tender from their much chattering), and the bellies of lampreys, brought from the most distant provinces. This may serve as some specimen of the luxury of the Roman suppers.

Their entertainments were accompanied with everything fitted to flatter the senses and to gratify the appetite. Musicians, male and female dancers, players of farce and pantomime, jesters and buffoons, and even gladiators exhibited while the guests sat at table. In order, if possible, to restrain such extreme luxury, a variety of sumptuary laws were promulgated from time to time, some of them limiting the number of dishes, others the number of guests, and others the expense to be bestowed on an entertainment, but all these attempts were completely unsuccessful. How, in effect, could it have been possible to bring back ancient simplicity, unless they could have also recalled

ancient poverty? When a state has once become generally opulent, the expenses of the rich must keep pace with their fortunes, otherwise the poor would want employment and subsistence. It is luxury that is silently levelling that inequality, or at least keeping fortunes in a constant fluctuation, giving vigour in this manner to all those various parts of the political machine, which would be otherwise apt to lose their strength and pliability for want of motion. We may wish that Rome had remained poor and virtuous, but, being once great and opulent, it was to have required an impossibility that she should not have been luxurious.

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## CHAPTER V.

### On the Art of War among the Romans.

WE have seen the Romans engaged for many ages in continual wars, first with the petty states of Italy, and afterward with foreign nations. From the prodigious success which attended the arms of this remarkable people, and from the dominion which they accomplished, at length, over almost the whole of the known world, it is a necessary inference that they must have carried the knowledge of the art military to a higher degree of perfection than any other of the ancient nations: to whatever collateral or partial causes we may attribute the success of some of their warlike enterprises, the great and leading cause of those rapid and extensive conquests could have been nothing else than the excellence of their military discipline, compared to that of the peoples whom they subdued. "It was not," says Vegetius, "to the superiority of numbers, nor to superior courage in the field, that the Romans owed their victories; but it was by art and by

discipline that they defeated those immense hosts of Gauls which poured down upon Italy; that they subdued the Spaniards, a hardier and more warlike race than themselves; the Africans, whose wealth furnished inexhaustible armies; and conquered even the Greeks, whose military abilities were for many ages superior to their own."

The nature of this military discipline, by which the Romans became masters of the world, is, therefore, an object extremely deserving of attention; and I shall endeavour here to give some idea of the state of the art of war, such as we find it to have been in the latter ages of the commonwealth, and in the first period of the history of the empire.

In a former chapter, in treating of the system of Roman education, we have taken notice of those exercises of the body to which all the youth of the republic were accustomed from their earliest infancy. By the constant practice of wrestling, boxing, launching the javelin, running, and swimming, they were enured from their cradle to that species of life which a soldier leads in the most active campaign in the field. They were accustomed to the military pace, that is, to walk twenty miles, and sometimes twenty-four, in *four* hours. During these marches they carried burdens of sixty pounds weight; and the weapons with which they were armed were double the weight of those which were used in the actual field of battle.\*

Every year after the election of the consuls, twenty-four military tribunes were chosen; fourteen from the order of the *Equites*, or knights, and ten from the body of the citizens. The people were then assembled by an edict of the consuls, commanding all who had attained the age of seventeen to appear in the area before the Capitol on an appointed day. According to the

\* Vegetius de Re Militari, c. 2; and Josephus, De Bell. Judaico, has given some very curious details of the Roman discipline.



number of legions which were to be formed, they appointed to each legion a certain number of tribunes. The tribes were then called out and divided into their proper centuries, and each century presented by rotation as many soldiers as there were legions intended to be raised. If there were four legions, each century took its turn in presenting four soldiers; and of these four, the tribunes of the first legion had the first choice of a man, the second the next, and so on: then four more were drawn out, and the second legion had the first choice. In the next selection, the third legion chose first, and in the following the fourth. Thus there was the utmost equality in the distribution of the citizens in the several legions.

The number of soldiers in the legion was various at different periods. At earlier times it consisted of three thousand, of four thousand, of five thousand, and six thousand; but under the emperors it might amount to even ten thousand or eleven thousand men.

Among the ancient nations there were in general but two different arrangements of the troops in order of battle. The one was that of the *phalanx*, commonly used by the Greeks; the other was the disposition of the troops by *manipuli*, or companies, arranged in the form of a *chequer* or *quincunx*, which, after the war with Pyrrhus, became the ordinary arrangement of the Roman army, and was probably then first tried as the most commodious disposition against the attack of the elephants. In the order of the *phalanx*, the heavy-armed infantry were all ranged upon one continued line, with no other intervals than those which distinguished the great divisions. In the *quincunx* order, a number of small companies or platoons were ranged in three straight lines, one behind the other, with alternate spaces between them, equal to the front of each company.

In the first line were the *Hastati*, heavy-armed troops, who at first used long spears, but afterward laid them aside for the *pilum*, or great javelin, and the

sword and buckler. In the second line were the *Principes*, likewise armed with the pilum, or javelin, and sword and buckler; and in the third line were the *Triarii*, armed with the long spear, formerly used by the *hastati*, and chiefly intended to sustain the shock of the enemy's cavalry. On the flanks of the line of *hastati* were placed the cavalry, likewise in detached *manipuli* or companies, armed only with a lance and javelin, pointed at the end, and a small buckler. Immediately before the *hastati*, and in the front of the line, were placed the *Velites*, or light-armed troops, who usually began the engagement, and, after maintaining a skirmishing fight for a while, drew off to the rear, and retired behind the *triarii*, leaving the main body to come into action. After the *velites* had withdrawn, the *hastati* usually began the attack, by throwing the pilum, or great javelin, which was a ponderous spear of seven feet in length, and of such thickness as barely to be grasped in the hand. It could not be used at a distance, from its immense weight; but within the space of twenty or thirty yards its effect was dreadful. After the discharge of the pila, the *hastati* rushed on with the sword and buckler, which were now their only weapons. The Roman sword was about a foot and a half in length, two-edged, with a broad blade, tapering to a point, so as to serve both for cutting and thrusting.\* What is singular is, that it was made of brass, but of so hard a composition as

\* The kind and quality of weapons are of very great consequence in war. The Roman sword was a weapon of great power and efficacy. The Romans owned themselves inferior to the Cimbri in courage and martial heroism; and confessed that even their superior discipline could not have availed them against the prodigious impetuosity of the attacks of this people; but, on the other hand, the swords of the Cimbri were of bad temper compared to theirs. They often bent at the first stroke; and the soldier was obliged to straighten his sword with his foot before he could make a second stroke.

to shiver like steel. The sword and buckler were common to all the ranks of the infantry.\*

The advantage of the chequer or quincunx arrangement of the legion was, that the Roman army could *three* times form the line of battle with fresh troops. Supposing the *hastati* to be foiled in their first onset, and even put to flight, the enemy found a new line of battle presented by the *principes*, who, using the same arms, first began with the terrible discharge of the *pila*, and then fought with the short sword. Meantime, the *hastati* had time to rally, and to form a new line behind the *triarii*.

No form could be so admirably adapted as that of the quincunx for changing movements according to the disposition of the enemy's line. On advancing, for example, to meet such an army as the Gauls, ranged in the order of the phalanx, nothing was easier than to form a great front like that of the enemy, without any intervals, by bringing up the *principes* to fill the spaces betwixt the companies of the *hastati*. When, again, they had to do with an enemy less active, but to whom they did not wish to give an opportunity of insinuating themselves between the *manipuli*, they filled up the intervals with the *velites*, and kept the *principes* in the second line with the *triarii*, as a *corps de reserve*. In those engagements where the enemy had in their front a train of elephants, upon the advance of those animals, nothing more was requisite than for the *principes* to march to a side, and form themselves in a line with the *hastati* and *triarii*; in other words, to form themselves into columns, with open spaces between each column. Thus the elephants, persecuted and driven on by the *velites*, found an entrance by these spaces between the columns, and passed through the legion without doing any mischief. This manœuvre was practised by Scipio at the battle

\* For an account of the arms of the Roman legion, see Lip-sius de Militia Romana, c. 3.



of Zama, and by Regulus, in his engagement in Africa with Xantippus.

The *quincunx* disposition was for some ages the characteristic of the Roman legion, which scarcely used any other method of arrangement; but the Romans afterward made many innovations upon the ancient tactic.\* From the time of Marius, the *quincunx* had gone into disuse, and Cæsar describes the legions in his wars as under a quite different form. The three manipuli of hastati, principes, and triarii, composed a *cohort*, and were ranged not by intervals, but in a line behind each other—or in columns;—the triarii, armed with the long spears, being usually placed in the front. It is not easy to see in what respects this disposition excelled the former. From this period the tactic of the Romans was perpetually changing, and, in the opinion of the ablest judges, growing worse from age to age.†

\* See a very good account of the state of the art military under the emperors in Gibbon's history, vol. i., c. 1.

† We may learn from Vegetius the constitution of the Roman legion under Trajan and Hadrian. The heavy-armed infantry was then divided into ten cohorts, or fifty-five companies, under a correspondent number of tribunes and centurions. The first cohort, which had the post of honour and the custody of the eagle, consisted of eleven hundred and five soldiers, the remaining nine consisted each of five hundred and fifty-five. The number of infantry in the whole legion was, therefore, six thousand and one hundred men. Their offensive arms were, first, the pilum; second, a light spear; third, the sword. The legion was usually drawn up eight deep, with a distance of three feet both between the files and ranks. The cavalry of the legion was divided into ten squadrons; the first, in proportion to the first cohort, consisting of one hundred and thirty-two men, the rest only of sixty-six—in all seven hundred and twenty-six horse. The horses of the cavalry were bred chiefly in Spain and Cappadocia. The arms of the men consisted of a helmet, an oblong shield, light boots, a coat-of-mail, a javelin, and a long broadsword. They borrowed afterward from the barbarians the use of lances and iron maces.

At no time was the tactic of the Romans more excellent than during the Punic wars, and to that cause we may attribute their successes against an enemy so formidable as the Carthaginians, and commanded by such able generals. The chief talent of Hannibal lay in varying and adapting the arrangement of his army according to circumstances of local situation; and often striking out some new and unexpected disposition formed in the instant of action, which disconcerted all the uniform and regular plans of the Romans. Such was that most remarkable disposition of the Carthaginian army at the battle of Cannæ, which decided the fate of that important day, by the utter destruction of the Roman army. I shall endeavour to give an idea of this very curious disposition, of which Polybius has left a full account; and I select it for this reason, that it has been misunderstood and misrepresented by the Chevalier Folard, a very able writer on the art military, but who, from his ignorance of the Greek language, was obliged to rely on the Latin translation of a monk who knew nothing of the art of war. The errors of Folard have been fully pointed out in the *Mémoires Militaires* of M. Guichard.

Hannibal, having passed the winter and spring in quarters, began the campaign by ravaging the whole country; and finding his army in want of provisions, he marched toward Cannæ, situated in a mountainous part of Apulia; a village where the Romans had established their magazines, and where they had brought all the military stores and provisions they had carried from Canusium. Hannibal took Cannæ by surprise; which, depriving the Romans of their stores, disconcerted their whole plan of operations. They could no longer pretend to harass and weary out the Carthaginians, but were obliged to think of giving them battle. The senate in this emergency sent a powerful reinforcement to the army, which now amounted to eighty thousand men, under the command of the two consuls, Varro and Æmilius; the

latter a general of great experience, but cool and deliberate; the former rash, impetuous, and extremely obstinate. Æmilius, sensible that the great superiority of Hannibal's army lay in his cavalry, wished to delay coming to an action till his situation should afford the best opportunity for the operations of infantry. Varro was for an immediate attack, and it being his turn to command, a pretty smart engagement ensued, which terminated doubtfully, but rather to the advantage of the Romans. Encouraged by this first success, they brooked with great impatience the cautious delays of Æmilius, who was still averse to a general engagement. The day following, when it was again the turn of Varro to command in chief, he ordered the army to take the field early in the morning, and to pass the river Aufidus, which lay between them and the Carthaginians. They passed without opposition, as Hannibal chose to rest everything upon a very artful manœuvre, which he had planned, to be discovered only in the moment of engagement.

The usual disposition of the Carthaginians was that of the phalanx. Varro resolved to imitate this disposition, and to give his army a front similar to it. His ignorance of the art of war here led him into a great error. He neglected the advantages which the legion derived from the ordinary disposition of the quincunx, and endeavoured to give a solidity and depth to his line, equal to that of the Carthaginians, not attending to this circumstance, that the arms of the legion were not suited to the close and compressed position, on which depended the strength of the phalanx; for the hastati and the principes could neither throw their pila with effect, nor manage their swords, for want of room: and the triarii, ranged immediately behind and close upon the manipuli of the hastati, could not, with their long spears, be of the smallest service. Such, however, was Varro's disposition: he brought up the principes to fill the spaces between the companies of the hastati, and advanced the triarii, so as to join their

companies to those of the hastati. On the right and left wing were the Roman cavalry, greatly inferior, as we have already observed, to those of the Carthaginians; and the velites or light infantry were ranged as usual in the front of the line.

Hannibal, whose army amounted to forty thousand foot and ten thousand horse, arranged the main body of his infantry in the close order of the *phalanx*: placing the best of his African heavy-armed troops to the right and left of the line, and in the centre the Gauls and Spaniards, armed only with the sword and buckler. On the right and left wings of his *phalanx* he posted the cavalry, immediately opposite to those of the enemy; and in the front of his line were ranged the Carthaginian light troops, in the same manner as those of the Romans. Having thus formed the great line of the *phalanx*, Hannibal ordered the Gauls and Spaniards in the centre to extend themselves forward from the main body in a semi-circular curve. This movement was concealed from the Romans by the line of the Carthaginian light troops, and was not perceived till after the skirmishing of the velites, when these troops, as was usual, fell back behind the main body.

The action began by these light troops, and continued pretty long and obstinate, while in the meantime the Carthaginian cavalry attacked the Roman horse on both wings, and being infinitely superior to them in number, broke, dispersed, and cut them all to pieces. The signal was now given for the velites on both sides to fall back, and the Romans then, for the first time, perceived the Carthaginian front, which, being far advanced, came in contact with, and was immediately attacked by, the centre of the Roman line. The Gauls and Spaniards who formed the curve, unable to sustain the impetuosity of this onset, gave way, as Hannibal had expected; while that part of the Roman line, impetuously pursuing its advantage, pushed forward in proportion as the enemy retreated, by which means the Roman line was bent in the middle into

an angular form. This position was what Hannibal foresaw and wished for. The Gauls and Spaniards, supported behind by the velites, formed a sort of new concave curve; and the heavy-armed infantry, the strength of the Carthaginian army, who had hitherto remained inactive, were now marched up, so as to come in contact with the opposite part of the Roman line, which was hurrying on to pursue the advantage gained by the centre, but which, now that the Africans were advanced, found themselves enclosed like a wedge.

In the meantime, the Carthaginian cavalry under the command of Asdrubal having entirely cut to pieces the horse of the enemy, doubled the flanks of the Roman army, and poured down upon the rear. They were now enclosed and furiously attacked on every quarter. The contest was not of long duration. The Romans, pressed together, had no space to use their arms. It was upon the part of the Carthaginians an absolute massacre and butchery; seventy thousand of the Romans were killed upon the spot, and ten thousand taken prisoners. Such was the celebrated battle of Cannæ, according to the idea given by M. Guichard, which is supported, in every particular, by the text of Polybius.

The disposition of the quincunx would in all probability have saved the Roman army, and disappointed the effect of Hannibal's artful manœuvre; which it is probable he had conceived only upon seeing the enemy in the order of the phalanx: for had the legions been formed in the order of the quincunx, only the first line of the hastati could have given into the snare which was laid for them, and the principes and triarii, entire and unbroken, must have been an overmatch for all that was opposed to them.

The quincunx, notwithstanding its great advantages, was, as I have already observed, disused in the times of the emperors, and consequently the arms of the soldiers must likewise have undergone considera-



ble changes. In the time of Vegetius, that is to say, under Valentinian, and probably long before that period, the pilum, the most formidable of the Roman weapons, was entirely laid aside; and a variety of weapons introduced, which are described by that author, but which were quite unknown during the perfection of the art of war among the Romans.

One most material part of the military science among the Romans was their art of intrenchment. It was to the perfection to which Cæsar carried this art, that he owed many of his greatest advantages in war. It seems to have been a maxim of his, that it was possible to make up for any inferiority in the number of his troops, by the additional strength of his intrenchments. Thus with sixty thousand men he defended himself in his intrenchments before *Alexia*, while the lines of circumvallation were attacked by two hundred and forty thousand Gauls, and the lines of countervallation by eighty thousand, without any effect.

These intrenchments were thrown up with amazing despatch. Every soldier upon his march carried along with him his palisade, which was a strong branch of a tree, having at one end three or four smaller branches sharpened to a point and hardened in the fire. When the square of the camp was traced out, each soldier, throwing aside his buckler, began to dig a ditch, ordinarily nine feet, but sometimes fourteen or fifteen feet in depth, and as much in width. The earth was thrown up upon the inside in the form of a rampart four or five feet in height, which was faced on the outside with those palisades or *stipites*, strongly fixed in the earth, and set so near each other that the branches, crossing obliquely, presented their points outward, and thus formed a strong hedge of irregular points, which it was extremely difficult to pierce. On each side of the square of the camp was a gate or issue, where a strong guard was always posted, which no soldier could pass without leave, under pain of death.

When a city was besieged, it was customary for the

Romans to divide their forces into several camps, encircling the place, and joined to each other by strong lines of circumvallation and countervallation. As the science of the attack and defence of fortified towns was carried to a great degree of perfection, both by the Romans and the Greeks, I shall endeavour to give some idea of this branch of the military art among the ancients, concerning which several of the modern writers are very much at variance.

The Chevalier Folard, in his Commentary on Polybius, makes the military art of the ancients by far too complicated, and much more so than a plain construction of the words of his author, or, indeed, of any other of the ancient writers, will warrant.

In his treatise on the attack and defence of fortified places, he endeavours to prove, that, excepting the use of gunpowder and artillery, every operation used by modern engineers was known and practised by the ancients; and that, in particular, the mode of approach by parallels and trenches was in continual use. Yet it is very certain, as M. Guichard has abundantly shown, that those authors who have written most minutely of the most important sieges, as Polybius, Cæsar, Arrian, and Josephus, and who express themselves in their details with very great perspicuity, give not the smallest countenance to such a notion.

The Romans observed two methods of proceeding in their sieges; the one was by means of the *agger*, a sort of terrace or mound of earth, on which they advanced their machines; and the other was by bringing up their machines to the foot of the walls without the help of such a terrace. The first was necessary only where the place was very strong, and the walls skillfully guarded and fortified. The method of proceeding against such fortified places was this:—the army, as I before observed, was divided into different quarters, separately intrenched around the city, which intrenchments communicated with each other by a line of countervallation drawn on the side next the town,

and a line of circumvallation on the outside, to defend against attacks from the quarter of the country. Then the ground was chosen for the construction of the agger, or terrace, which was a lengthened mound of earth, beginning by a gentle slope, from one of the camps, and proceeding forward, gradually increasing in elevation as it approached the town. As this terrace was to be the stage from which all the engines of attack were to be played against the city, it was the object of the besieged to endeavour, by every possible means, to prevent the carrying on of this work. Stones, darts, and combustible matters, were continually launched against the operators; and sometimes a mine was dug from the city, to pass under the front of the terrace, and scoop away its foundation.

The besiegers, on the other hand, guarded against these annoyances by protecting themselves, while at work, under covered sheds, termed *vineæ*, which were composed of hurdles, or wicker-work, covered with hides, and supported on stakes, which they moved along as the work advanced. The front of the terrace, where the workmen were chiefly employed, was protected either by a *testudo*, or covered pent-house, or simply by a curtain of skins, supported upon a large tree, laid transversely upon two others.

When the besiegers, under these covers, had brought the agger, or terrace, sufficiently near to the wall, they then advanced the engines of attack. The *catapultæ* and *balistæ* were ranged upon the terrace, at distances proportioned to their several projectile powers, and advanced or drawn back till they were made to bear upon the very spot which the besiegers intended to assail. The powers of these engines of attack almost exceed credibility. The *catapultæ centenaria*, which was the smallest size of these machines, threw a weight of one hundred pounds to the distance of five hundred paces. The largest *catapultæ* threw stones of one thousand two hundred pounds weight. The *balistæ* were constructed for throwing great and heavy



darts. As to the particular construction of these machines we can only form conjectures. The commentators on Vegetius have given several different forms of catapultæ and balistæ, but they are by far too complicated, and have a great deal of needless machinery of wheels, pulleys, axles, and levers. Much simpler contrivances might answer the same end, and be more easily managed. The form of the catapulta, given by M. Folard, is sufficiently simple, and corresponds well enough with the description in Vegetius.

A large lever is fixed at the lower end between two cables, very strongly twisted; the lever has, at the upper end, a hollow in the form of a dish, for receiving the stone or ball which is to be thrown. It is brought down to a horizontal position by means of this rope and hand-lever, which straightens the cable spring; and when let off by means of a catch, it returns to its position with prodigious force, and striking against the cross-bar at the top, the stone or ball is projected to a very great distance.

The balista, for throwing arrows, was, according to the idea of M. Folard, of a construction considerably different, though depending on the same mechanical principles with the catapulta; yet, from the promiscuous use of the two terms, which we often find made by the ancient authors, I think it is not at all improbable, that the same machine might have been so contrived as to serve both for stones and arrows: for instance, nothing more was necessary than to fix a sort of long trough or groove, horizontally projecting from the cross-beam at the top, in which the arrows should be placed, with their ends a little advanced beyond the line of the cross-beam. It is evident that, when the spring-lever struck against the beam, so as to throw out a stone from the dish, the arrows in the groove, receiving the whole force of the stroke, would be discharged with great violence at the same time.

But these engines, the catapultæ and balistæ, though most formidable in their effects, were incapa-

ble of making a breach in the walls of a strongly fortified city. The only engine capable of producing this effect was the *battering-ram*; and the whole contrivances of the *aggeres*, or terraces, towers, *testudines*, *vineæ*, or covered galleries, had no other object than to facilitate the approach of the ram, which, if it was once effected, and the engine had free space to play, all ancient authors are agreed that it was decisive of the fate of the town. No wall, however strong, was capable of resisting its force. The object, therefore, of the besiegers was, by means of the catapultæ and ballistæ, and by the command which the elevation of the terrace gave them, to clear the walls of their defenders, and to obstruct the play of those engines which the besieged were continually working to prevent the approach of the ram, or to weaken its force; so that as soon as the besiegers from the terrace were able to silence the batteries from the walls, the ram, coming up in security under the cover of a testudo, began to play without intermission till the breach was effected. It consisted of an enormous beam of wood, armed at the one end with a head of iron, and suspended so as to hang in *equilibrio*, from a cross-beam of the testudo, or pent-house.

The besiegers, besides employing the contrivances of the *aggeres*, *testudines*, *vineæ*, and *battering-ram*, constructed frequently moveable towers of such a height as to overtop the walls of the city; and these towers answered a variety of purposes. The under part of the tower served for a testudo to a *battering-ram*, which played under its cover, while on the top were planted archers and slingers to clear the ramparts of those who endeavoured to counteract the operation of the ram by letting down great beams, chains, and hoops, to destroy its equilibrium, and impede its motion. These moveable towers were frequently so constructed as to let down, from the side next to the city, a platform to serve as a bridge from the tower to

the top of the walls, by means of which an access was gained for the besiegers into the city.

For the defence of the city, the besieged employed the same engines used by the besiegers for the discharge of stones and darts, the catapultæ and balistæ. The walls were carefully manned on every quarter where an attack was meditated, and every device employed for annoying the besiegers, retarding their operations, and preventing the approach of the ram to the walls. The gates, which the besiegers generally attempted to burn down, were defended from fire by covering them with iron plates or with raw skins. The wall above the gates was likewise bored with perpendicular openings, through which the besieged could pour water to extinguish them if set on fire. In the inside was a portcullis, suspended by iron chains, which, when a small body of the enemy had forced the way through the gates, the besieged could suddenly let down, and thus despatch them when they were separated from the rest of the assailants.

Such were the most ordinary methods employed by the ancients in the attack and defence of fortified towns. I speak not of the Romans alone; for they borrowed the greater part of their knowledge, in this branch of the military art, from the Greeks, among whom it was early reduced to a system. If we compare the description which Josephus has given of the siege of Jotapat by the Romans in the reign of Vespasian, with the detail given us by Thucydides of the siege of Plataea, which happened about 600 years before that period, we shall find the same method both of attack and defence. They continued to be in general use down to modern times; till the invention of gunpowder made a great change in almost every part of the art military.

It was not till the latter ages of the commonwealth, that naval warfare was at all practised by the Romans. Till the first Punic war, the Romans never had any equipment of ships for the purposes of war.

A Carthaginian galley, which was stranded on the coast of Italy, served them, as formerly observed, for a model, and, it is said, with a very moderate regard to probability, that, in the space of two months, this resolute and active people equipped a fleet of one hundred galleys of five banks of oars, and twenty of three banks. The construction of these vessels, and particularly the disposition of the different ranges, or banks of oars, has given occasion to much speculation among the moderns. The difficulty of supposing five different lines or orders of rowers disposed one above another, has occasioned the conjectures of some authors, that the expression of *triremes* and *quinqueremes* meant no more than that there were in some galleys three men to an oar, and in others five. But the expressions of the ancient writers clearly show that there were different ranks which sat above each other. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the importance which men of learning assume to themselves from that parade of erudition which they sometimes choose to display on the most insignificant topics. Meibomius has written a treatise upon the structure of the ancient *triremis*, in which, from a variety of quotations from ancient authors, and critical disquisitions upon the meaning of some of their technical phrases, he shows that Scaliger, Salmasius, and the ablest of the modern critics, were totally in the dark as to the true sense of those authors; and so highly does he value himself upon his discoveries, that he dedicates his book, *Regibus, Principibus, Rebus-publicisque Maris Interni accolis*; "To all the kings, princes, and states whose territories lie upon the Mediterranean." His treatise again has been answered by Opelius, and thus the dispute goes on to the length of folio volumes to settle this important point, whether the *thranites*, one order of rowers, sat uppermost, and the *thalamites* undermost, or whether these last were above, and the former below.\*

\* The late Lieutenant-General Melville, who united a taste for

Besides the *longæ naves*, or ships-of-war, such as those we have mentioned, the Romans made use of small vessels called *liburnicæ*, which were serviceable during a naval engagement in carrying the general's or admiral's orders from one part of the squadron to the other. They were so called from the Liburni, a people of Illyria, who followed a piratical way of life, and used small, quick-sailing vessels. In a naval engagement the general himself, in one of these *liburnicæ*, was wont to sail through the fleet, and give his orders for the dispositions and motions of the squadron.

antiquities to great professional knowledge, has some curious ideas upon this subject of the structure of the ancient galleys. He conjectures that the waste part of the vessels rose obliquely above the water's edge, with an angle of forty-five degrees, or near it; that upon the inner sides of this waist part, the seats of the rowers, each about two feet in length, were fixed horizontally in rows, with no more space between each seat and those on all sides of it, than should be found necessary for the free movements of men when rowing together. The *quincunx*, or chequer order, would afford this advantage in the highest degree possible; and in consequence of the combination of two obliquities, those inconveniences, which, according to the common idea of the regulation of such galleys, must have attended the disposition of so great a number of rowers, are entirely removed. In 1773, the general caused the fifth of the waist of a *quinqueremis* to be erected in the back yard of his house, in Great Pulteney street. This model contained with sufficient ease, in a very small place, thirty rowers in five tiers of six men in each lengthwise, making one fifth of the rowers on each side of a *quinqueremis*, according to Polybius, who assigns three hundred for the whole complement, besides one hundred and twenty fighting men. This construction, the advantages of which appeared evident to those who examined it, serves to explain many difficult passages of the Greek and Roman writers concerning naval matters. The general's discovery is confirmed by ancient monuments. The collection at Portici contains ancient paintings of several galleys, one or two of which, by representing the stern part, show both the obliquity of the sides, and the rows of oars reaching to the water; and many ancient basso-relievoes show the oars issuing chequer-wise from the sides.—See Gillies' History of Greece, cap. 5.



In their naval engagements the ancients had no means of assailing each other at a distance but with the javelin; nor had they any contrivance for disabling the vessels of the enemy, unless in some of their largest ships, which were constructed with towers on their stern, from which they could use the balista or catapulta. The *corvus*, or grappling machine, used by the Romans, served to fasten the ships to each other during the action, while the men were engaged with the sword and buckler or with spears. Under the emperors, the Romans maintained their distant conquests not only by their arms but by their fleets, which were disposed in all the quarters of the empire, and preserved a fixed station, as did the legions.\*

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## CHAPTER VI.

Reflections arising from a view of the Roman History during the Commonwealth.

In the view which I have endeavoured to give of the rise and the progress of the Roman republic, and of the states of Greece previously, I have been less attentive through the whole to a minute and scrupulous detail of events, than studious to mark those circumstances which show the spirit and genius of those

\* Augustus stationed two permanent fleets at Ravenna, on the Adriatic, and at Misenum, in the Bay of Naples, to command the two seas, each squadron containing several thousand marines. They consisted chiefly of the lighter vessels called *Liburnicae*. A very considerable armament was likewise stationed at Frejus, on the coast of Provence, and another was appointed to guard the Euxine. To these may be added the fleet which preserved the communication between Gaul and Britain, and a number of vessels constantly maintained on the Rhine and Danube.



remarkable nations, and illustrate those great moral and political truths which it is the most valuable province of history to point out and inculcate.

To consider history only as a magazine of facts, arranged in the order of their dates, is nothing more than the indulgence of a vain and childish curiosity; a study which tends to no valuable or useful purpose. The object of the study of history is one of the noblest of the pursuits of man. It is to furnish the mind with the knowledge of that great art on which depends the existence, the preservation, the happiness and prosperity of states and empires.

That the connexion of politics with morality is inseparable, the smallest acquaintance with history is sufficient to show.

No nation has afforded a more striking example, than the Romans have done, of the necessity of *good morals to the preservation of political liberty and the happiness of the people*. This is a doctrine of so much importance, that it cannot be too seriously considered nor attended to. Unlike, in this respect, to many other political truths which are interesting only to statesmen, and those who conduct the machine of government, this truth is of importance to be known and considered by every single individual of the community; because the error or fault is in the *conduct of individuals*, and can only be amended by a conviction brought home to the mind of every private man, that the reformation must be begun by his own virtuous and patriotic endeavours.

It will, therefore, be no unprofitable task if I shall endeavour, from the history of the Roman republic, and likewise from that of the states of Greece, which were before under our consideration, to throw together in one view such striking facts as tend to exemplify and illustrate this great and useful lesson, of which the application is not confined to any age or country, but is equally suited to the subject of a *monarchy* and of a *republic*; equally important to the modern Briton, as

it was to the ancient Greek or Roman. For in truth, no principle is more false or more pernicious than that assumed by some political writers, that virtue is *essentially necessary to a republic alone*. Virtue is necessary, and indispensably necessary, to the existence of every government, whatever be its form; and no human institution where men are assembled together to act in concert, however limited be their numbers, or however extensive, however wise may be their governors, however excellent their laws, can possess any measure of duration without that powerful cement, virtue in the principles and morals of the people. *Quid leges sine moribus vanæ proficiunt*,\* is a sentiment equally applicable to all governments whatever.

The love of liberty, or the passion for national freedom, is a noble, a disinterested, and a virtuous feeling. Where this feeling is found to prevail in any great degree, it is a proof that the manners of that community are yet pure and unadulterated; for corruption of manners infallibly extinguishes the patriotic spirit. In a nation confessedly corrupted, there is often found a prevailing cry for liberty, which is heard the loudest among the most profligate of the community; but let us carefully distinguish *that* spirit from *virtuous patriotism*. Let us examine the morals, the private manners of the demagogue who preaches forth the love of liberty; remark the character and examine the lives of those who listen with the greatest avidity to his harangues, and re-echo his vociferations—and let this be our criterion to judge of the principle which actuates them.† The aversion to restraint assumes the same external appearance with the love of liberty;

\* “Of what value are laws without good morals?”

† “That man,” says Æschines, “who is an unnatural father, and a hater of his own blood, can never be a worthy leader of the people; the soul that is insensible to the tenderest domestic relations can never feel the more general bond of patriotic affection: he who in private life is vicious, can never be virtuous in the concerns of the public.”

but this criterion will enable us to distinguish the reality from the counterfeit. In fact, the spirit of liberty and a general corruption of manners are so totally adverse and repugnant to each other, that it is utterly impossible they should have even the most transitory existence in the same age and nation. When Thrasybulus delivered Athens from the thirty tyrants, liberty came too late; the manners of the Athenians were irretrievably corrupted; licentiousness, avarice, and debauchery had induced a mortal disease. When Antigonus and the Achæan states restored liberty to the Spartans, they could not enjoy or preserve it; the spirit of liberty was utterly extinct, for they were a corrupted people. The liberty of Rome could not be recovered by the death of Cæsar; it had gone for ever with her virtuous manners.

On the other hand, while virtue remains in the manners of the people, no national misfortune is irretrievable, nor any political situation so desperate, that hope may not remain for a favourable change. If the morals of the people be entire, the spirit of patriotism pervading the ranks of the state will excite to such exertions as may soon recover the national honour. Of this truth the Roman state afforded at one time a most striking example. When Hannibal was carrying everything before him in Italy, when the Roman name was sunk so low that the allies of the republic were daily dropping off, and the Italian states seemed to stand aloof, and leave her to her fate, there was in the manners of the people, and in that patriotic ardour which can only exist in an uncorrupted age, a spirit of reconvalence which speedily operated a most wonderful change of fortune. Of all the allied states, Hiero, king of Syracuse, manifested the greatest political foresight. When solicited to forsake the Romans in this hour of their adversity, he stood firm to his alliance. He saw, that, although sunk under the pressure of temporary misfortune, patriotism was still alive and the constitution of the republic was still

sound; and he rightly concluded that she would recover her strength and splendour. So likewise at Carthage, when the intelligence arrived of the great victory gained over the Romans at Cannæ;—the most sanguine and short-sighted manifested the highest exultation, and concluded that Rome for certain was in the possession of Hannibal, *et quod actum erat de republicâ Romanâ*, (that the Roman republic was irretrievably ruined): but the wiser sort judged far otherwise; and, hearing of those intrepid resolutions of the senate upon that great calamity, sagaciously foresaw that this misfortune would but rouse to a more desperate resistance, and accumulate the whole strength of the Romans, of which hitherto there had been only partial exertions. The lapse of a hundred and forty years, however, made a prodigious change in the Roman character. In the time of Marius and Sylla, a defeat like Cannæ would have been decisive of the fate of Rome. Had Hiero lived in the time of the Second Triumvirate, he would have abandoned the republic to her fate, which he must have seen to be inevitable.

The force of the torrent of corruption in the degeneracy of a nation is never so sensibly perceived, so strongly felt, as when one man of uncommon virtue makes a signal endeavour to oppose it. If his example, though ineffectual to excite a general imitation, is yet strong enough to attract applause, there is still some faint hope that *that* nation or people is not beyond the possibility of recovery. Thus, when, after the defeat of Antiochus, and the plunder of his kingdom, the virtuous Scipio withstood every temptation to accumulate wealth—temptations judged so powerful, that it was thought impossible he should have resisted them, and he underwent on that ground a calumnious prosecution—the conduct of that great man on this occasion excited universal admiration; a proof that, amid great corruption, public virtue was not yet *extinct*. In that age, a few such men as Scipio might have postponed the approaching ruin of their country.

But when things have once proceeded to that depth of degeneracy, that the example of one virtuous man strenuously resisting the torrent cannot command even a sterile applause, but is received with scorn and contempt, then is that nation gone beyond all hopes, and no human power can prevent its hastening to ruin. A very few years from the time of the last-mentioned example had produced this fatal difference in the manners of the Romans. When the first triumvirate, Pompey, Cæsar, and Crassus, had gone such lengths toward the destruction of the Roman liberty, and had so debauched the manners of the people, that candidates for offices, instead of depending on their merits or services, openly bought the suffrages of the people, and, improving in corruption, instead of purchasing single votes, went directly to the triumviri and paid down the ready money; when all was going headlong to perdition, the younger Cato attempted to impose some check upon this torrent of wickedness. What was the consequence?—He only procured to himself the contempt and hatred of both rich and poor, the former detesting the man who forbade them to buy the liberty of their country, and the latter execrating him who would have prevented them from making money by the sale of it.

Whether it was the intercourse with the Carthaginians, whose want of probity and of national faith had passed into a proverb; or whether it was the internal corruption of the manners of the Romans themselves, a people now flushed with the arrogance that attends repeated conquests—it is not easy to determine; but it is certain that the national character of the Romans seems to have undergone its most remarkable change for the worse, from the time of the destruction of their rival, Carthage. The last Punic war itself was prompted, as we have seen, by a most mean, ungenerous, and dastardly spirit in the Romans. But, after the fall of Carthage, some of the public measures became stained with the most horri-



ble perfidy. Their conduct to Viriathus, a Spanish chief, of whom they first purchased an ignominious peace, and afterward broke it by hiring assassins to murder him; and their shameful treachery and cruelty to the people of Numantia, whom they basely attacked, murdered, and exterminated, while they thought themselves safe under the sanction of a most solemn treaty—these are instances marking so total a depravation of national character, as could be followed by nothing else but the ruin of the state that could furnish them. Accordingly, we find similar instances following each other in the quickest succession, from this time down to the entire subversion of the commonwealth.

When the passion of avarice had, as at this time, pervaded all the ranks of the state, it is not to be wondered that the public measures should be in the greatest degree mean and disgraceful. The ambition of conquest was now little else than the desire of rapine and plunder. If the allies of the state were opulent, the Romans considered their wealth as a sufficient reason for dissolving all treaties between them, and holding them as a lawful object of conquest. Thus the kingdoms of Numidia, of Pergamus, of Cappadocia, of Bithynia, separate sovereignties bound to the allegiance of the Romans by the most solemn treaties, were invaded as if they had been ancient and natural enemies, and reduced to the condition of conquered provinces. The senate made a kind of traffic of thrones and governments, selling them openly to the highest bidder.

It is curious, in this state of the Roman manners, to observe the pretences sometimes alleged for going to war, when any country offered a tempting object to their avidity and rapaciousness.

Manlius, the consul, undertook an expedition against the Gallo-Grecians or Galatians, a people of Asia Minor. It was alleged that the war was unjust, for they had given the Romans no sort of provocation.



But the general urged, in excuse, that they were a wicked and profligate people, and that some of their ancestors, a few centuries before, had plundered the temple of Delphi. The apology was admitted, and Manlius was decreed the honour of a triumph for having avenged this horrible sacrilege. Justin, the historian, informs us of a similar instance. The Romans engaging along with the Acarnanians, against the people of Ætolia, had no other excuse to allege for their interference in this quarrel, than that the Acarnanians had performed a signal act of friendship to their ancestors about a thousand years before—which was that he had not joined the other Grecian states *in sending troops to the siege of Troy!*

In the last ages of the commonwealth, the generals who commanded in those military expeditions, from a selfish and ambitious policy, studied to increase this prevailing depravity. They allowed their soldiers to plunder with impunity, and countenanced every species of dissoluteness of manners, in order to gain the affection of the troops. “Lucius Sylla,” says Sallust, “that he might gain the attachment of his army, entirely corrupted their ancient simplicity of manners.” It was under him, in his Asiatic expeditions, that the Roman soldiers first became addicted to debauchery and drinking. There, also, they learned an affectation of taste for paintings and for statues; a taste which in them led to private theft, to public rapine, and even to sacrilege. The vanquished nations had nothing to expect from such conquerors, but to be stripped and plundered of all they possessed.

The shocking corruption of which Jugurtha made the experiment upon all the ranks of the state; the facility which he found in screening himself from the punishment of his atrocious crimes, first by bribing the Roman senate, and afterward by corrupting the generals who were sent against him; are scarcely credible to those who have been accustomed to consider the Romans, in the early times of the republic,

as an heroic, a free, and a virtuous people. But the Romans were now weary of calm and rational happiness; their virtues were an incumbrance; and they saw no value in their liberty, but in so far as they could make money by the sale of it. Some few, who yet possessed a remnant of virtue, either from motives of personal safety, or perhaps ashamed to live in such society, voluntarily banished themselves from their country. The scenes that followed under Sylla, Cinna, and the two triumvirates, were the last struggles which terminate a violent and mortal disease.

That the extinction of the liberties of the Roman people, and the downfall of the commonwealth, were owing to the corruption of the Roman manners, there cannot be the smallest doubt; nor is it difficult to point out in a few words the causes of that corruption. The extent of the Roman dominions toward the end of the republic proved fatal to its virtues. While confined within the bounds of Italy, every Roman soldier, accustomed to a life of hardship, of frugality, and of industry, placed his chief happiness in contributing in war to the preservation of his country, and in peace to the maintenance of his family by honest labour. A state of this kind, which knows no intervals of ease or of indolence, is a certain preservative of good morals, and a sure antidote against every species of corruption. But the conquest of Italy paved the way for the reduction of foreign nations; for an immense acquisition of territory, a flood of wealth, and an acquaintance with the manners, the luxuries, and the vices of the nations whom they subdued. The Roman generals, instead of returning as formerly, after a successful war, to the labours of the field, the occupations of industry, and a life of temperance and frugality, were now the governors of kingdoms and of provinces. In these they lived with the splendour of sovereign princes, and returning, after the period of their command, to Rome, brought with them immense treasures, which they had accumulated by

every species of rapine and oppression. Their importance at home was now signalized by a desire of obtaining dominion over their country similar to that which they had exercised in their province. Utterly impatient of the restraints of a subject, they could be satisfied with nothing less than sovereignty. The armies they had commanded abroad, debauched by the plunder of kingdoms, and attached by selfish interest to the men who had countenanced and indulged them in rapine, were completely disposed to support them in all their schemes of ambition. It was now only necessary to secure the favour of the people of Rome, which the increasing taste for luxury presented an easy method of obtaining. Games and shows were exhibited at the most enormous expense, and festivals prepared for the populace with every refinement of luxurious magnificence; and the Roman people, in the emphatic words of Juvenal,

——— “*duas tantum res anxius optat,  
Panem et Circenses,*”

(that is, anxious only for food and games,) easily abandoned their liberty to the man who went the farthest in indulging them in the sensual gratifications. Rivals, in the same path of ambition, divided this worthless populace into parties. “The public assemblies,” as M. Montesquieu has well remarked, “were now so many conspiracies against the state, and a tumultuous crowd of seditious wretches were dignified with the title of *comitia*. The authority of the people and their laws were, in these times of universal anarchy, no more than a chimera.” With a people thus fated to destruction, in a government thus irretrievably destroyed by the decay of those springs which once supported it, it was a matter of very little consequence by the hands of what particular individuals it was finally extinguished. We have seen who were the active instruments in that dissolution, and the measures by which they accomplished it, and it is needless here to recapitulate them.

From a consideration of the rise and fall of the states of Greece and Rome, a political question has arisen, which in this place it is of some importance to examine, and which the preceding observations, I believe, may, in a great measure, assist us in solving.

There is no maxim more common among the political writers, nor any which is generally received with less hesitation, than this, that the constitution of every empire, like that of the human body, has necessarily its successive periods of growth, maturity, decline, and extinction. The fate of all the ancient nations whose annals are recorded in history has led to the adopting of this as an axiom, for which, independent of experience, it is not very easy to assign a reasonable foundation.

All conclusions from analogy should be cautiously weighed. The mind of man, pleasing itself with its own sagacity in discovering relations not obvious to a common observer, has a great propensity, in comparing facts to reduce them to general laws; and from the coincidence and even resemblance of a few striking particulars, is apt very hastily to conclude that a perfect analogy holds between them. This mode of reasoning is extremely fallacious, and is never more to be suspected than when an analogy is attempted to be drawn from physical truths to moral ones.

The human body, we know, contains within itself the principles of decay. It undergoes a perpetual change from time. The bodily organs, at first weak and imperfect, attain gradually to their perfect strength. At this period they cannot be arrested, but are subject to a decline equally perceptible with their progress to perfection. But this is not the case with the body politic. The springs of its life do not necessarily undergo a perpetual change from time; nor is it subject to the influence of any principle of corruption which may not be checked and even eradicated by wholesome laws. "If," says the eloquent Rousseau, "Sparta and Rome have gone to destruction, what govern-

ment or constitution can hope for perpetuity?" True, it may be answered, Sparta and Rome *have* gone to destruction; but was this the effect of a law of nature, or does it follow that since these two states, excellent indeed in many respects in their constitution, are now extinct, all others must exhibit a similar progress? From the history of ancient nations, it is not difficult for a reader of discernment to discover and point out the principle of corruption which has led to their dissolution; and a good politician can see what remedy could have been effectual to check or to eradicate the evil. Sparta enjoyed a longer period of prosperous duration than any other state of antiquity. As long as her original constitution remained inviolate, which was for the period of several centuries, the Lacedæmonians were a virtuous, a happy, and a respectable people. Frugality, we know, was the soul of Lycurgus's establishment. The luxurious disposition of a single citizen introduced the poison of corruption. Lysander, whose military talents raised his country to a superiority over all the Grecian states, sent home, after the conquest of Athens, the wealth of that luxurious republic to Lacedæmon. It was debated in the senate whether it should be received: the best and wisest of that order considered it as a most dangerous breach of the institutions of their legislator; but others were dazzled with the lustre of that gold, with which they were, till now, unacquainted, and the influence of Lysander prevailed for its reception. It was decreed to receive the money for the use of the state, while it was at the same time declared a capital crime for any of it to be found in the possession of a private citizen—a weak resolution, which in effect was consecrating, and making respectable in the eyes of the citizens, that very thing of which it was necessary to forbid them to aspire at the possession.

Thus did corruption begin its first attack upon the constitution of Lycurgus. But was this corruption a necessary or an unavoidable evil? was Sparta come



to that period, when a Lysander *must* of necessity have arisen, whose disposition was adverse to the spirit of her constitution, and whose influence was sufficiently powerful to effect that breach of her fundamental laws? A single voice in the senate, perhaps, decided the fate of that illustrious commonwealth. Had there been one other virtuous man, whose negative would have caused the rejection of that pernicious measure, Sparta might have continued to exist for ages, frugal, warlike, virtuous, and uncorrupted. Or again, even supposing corruption once introduced, was it utterly impossible to find a remedy for the disease? Might not a second Lycurgus have arisen, who could check that evil in its infancy against which the first was able so well to guard?

The beginning of the corruption of the Roman state, we have seen, may be dated from the time that the territory was extended beyond the bounds of Italy. The fatal effects of enlarging the empire were certainly not foreseen; or we must conclude that the same parties who were so jealous of the smallest attacks upon the liberty of the people, would have been doubly anxious to have guarded against measures which led, though remotely, to the extinction of all liberty and the overthrow of the constitution; and had the effect of these measures been foreseen, a few wise and virtuous politicians might have prevented this being adopted. This, at least, we may say, that if, by a fundamental law of the state, the Roman empire had been confined to Italy, and it had been a capital crime for any Roman citizen to have proposed to carry the arms of the republic beyond the limits of that country, the republic might have preserved its constitution inviolate for many ages beyond the period of its actual duration.

Several ingenious men have exercised their talents in framing the plan of such a political constitution as should best promote the happiness of the citizens, while it possessed the greatest possible stability. We



lay out of the question such ideal governments as the republic of Plato, the Utopia of More, and some modern theories no less chimerical, because they proceed upon the basis of amending the nature of man, and eradicating all his evil passions. The systems of Harrington, however, in his "Oceana," and of Mr. Hume in his "Idea of a perfect Commonwealth," have been considered as more worthy of the attention of mankind, as resting upon the basis of human nature such as it is, and without assuming for their foundation any wonderful improvement either of the moral or intellectual nature of our species. Harrington, who wrote his "Oceana" during the period of the commonwealth of England, was so intoxicated with that newly erected system of government, as agreeing in many respects with his own theory, that he boldly ventured to pronounce it impossible that monarchy should ever be re-established in England. Yet his book was scarcely published, when the nation, weary of an experiment which, under the mask of freedom, had loaded them with tenfold tyranny, recurred to their ancient monarchical constitution.

With respect to Mr. Hume's "Idea of a perfect Commonwealth," it were, perhaps, not difficult to show that, instead of simplifying the machine of government, it renders it so complicated, that it would be impossible for it to proceed either with that regularity or despatch which is often most essential to the mass of public measures. If, for example, in Mr. Hume's senate of one hundred members, there should be only ten dissentient voices to the passing of a law, that law is to be sent back to be debated and canvassed by no less than eleven thousand county representatives. In the same manner, if there should be but five of the one hundred senators who approve of a law, while ninety-five disapprove of it, those five have a right to summon the eleven thousand county representatives, and take their sense of the matter. It surely requires little political judgment to pronounce that

such a constitution is utterly unfit for the regulation of an extended or populous empire, yet Great Britain is the subject upon which he supposes in theory that the experiment is to be tried. God forbid it ever should ! Had this experiment been proposed in reality, Mr. Hume himself would have been the first man to have resisted it. His genuine sentiments of such experiments he has given in the words of sound sense and wisdom. "It is not with forms of government," says he, "as with other artificial contrivances, where an old engine may be rejected if we can discover another more accurate or commodious, or where trials may be safely made, even though the success be doubtful. An established government has an infinite advantage by that very circumstance of its being established ; the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason, and never attributing authority to anything that has not the recommendation of antiquity. To tamper, therefore, in this affair," says he, "and to try experiments, merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be the part of a wise magistrate, who will bear a *reverence* to what carries the marks of age : though he may attempt some improvements for the public good, yet will he adjust his innovations as much as possible to the ancient fabric, and preserve entire the chief pillars and supports of the constitution."

Time, which brings improvement to every science, has undoubtedly contributed much to the advancement of political knowledge. Among the chief advantages derived from the art of printing is that of fixing and perpetuating all human attainments in science, which, before that invention, either perished with their authors, or if preserved by writing, were sparingly communicated even in the country which produced them, seldom reached beyond it, and were often in the course of a few generations irretrievably lost. By the art of printing, the opinions of some of the greatest of the ancient philosophers and politicians, and, what is much

more valuable, the great outlines of the history of the most remarkable states of antiquity, their laws, their manners, and customs, are now committed to perpetual records, open to all nations, and familiar to the knowledge of every individual who has enjoyed the most ordinary education.

It is from this knowledge of the accumulated experience of ages, that not only men, but nations, may derive the most important lessons. History will inform us, that some nations have enjoyed, during the course of many ages, an unvarying and uninterrupted prosperity; while others have been destined to a short, unfortunate, and despicable mediocrity. History will inform us, that the greatest empires which have hitherto existed on the earth are now sunk into oblivion; that Persia, Egypt, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, have fallen themselves, like the petty states which they overwhelmed in their conquest. But while we contemplate their changes of fortune, their prosperity, their disgraces, their revolutions, and their final catastrophe, must these vicissitudes be considered only as the effect of a blind fatality? Can they furnish us with no other conclusion than that every human institution must yield to the hand of time, against which neither wisdom nor virtue can ultimately afford a defence? No, certainly: every nation of antiquity has met with that fate which either its own political institutions, or the operation of foreign circumstances, must necessarily have induced. "Accustom your mind," said the excellent Phocion to Aristias, "to discern in the prosperity of nations that recompense which the Author of Nature has affixed to the practice of virtue; and in their adversity, the chastisement which he has thought proper to bestow on vice." No state ever ceased to be prosperous but in consequence of having departed from those institutions to which she owed her prosperity.

The ancient political writers, in speaking on the best form of a political establishment, held this as a

great *desideratum*, that a government should possess within itself a power of periodical reformation; a capacity of reforming from time to time all abuses; of checking every overgrowth of power in any one branch of the body politic; and, at short intervals of time, winding up, as it were the springs of the machine, and bringing the constitution back to its first principles. To the want of this power of periodical reformation in the ancient constitutions, which was ineffectually endeavoured to be supplied by such contrivances as the *ostracism* and *petalism*, we may in a great measure attribute their decline and extinction; for in these governments, when the balance was once destroyed by an increase of power in any one branch, the evil grew worse from day to day, and, at length was utterly irremediable, unless by a revolution or entire change of the political system. Happily for Britons, that which was a desideratum in the ancient governments is with them realized; that power of reforming all abuses, and even of making alterations and amendments as time and circumstances require, which is perfectly agreeable to the spirit of their constitution, has given to them an unspeakable advantage over all the states of antiquity.

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

### CHAPTER I.

Fate of the Roman Republic decided by the Battle of Actium—Reign of Augustus—Birth of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST—Tiberius—Crucifixion of our Saviour—Caligula—Claudius—Nero—Galba—Otho—Vitellius—Vespasian—Titus—Domitian—Nerva—Trajan—Adrian.

THE battle of Actium decided, as we have above seen, the fate of the Roman republic; and Octavius, now hailed by the splendid title of Augustus, was master of the Roman empire. We have seen this singular person raise himself to the highest summit of power, without a tincture of those manly and heroic virtues which generally distinguish the authors of important revolutions. Those fortunate circumstances which concurred to promote his elevation—the adoption by Julius Cæsar, the weakness of Lepidus, the infatuation of Mark Antony, the treachery of Cleopatra, and, perhaps, more than all, his own insinuating flattery and duplicity of conduct—were shortly hinted at as the great instruments in the good fortune of Augustus.

Possessing that sagacity which enabled him to discern distinctly what species of character would please the people, he had, in addition to this, all that versatility of genius which enabled him to assume it; and so successfully did he follow out this idea, that to those unacquainted with the former conduct of the man, nothing was now discernible but the qualities which were indicative of goodness and virtue and mu-



nificence. The fate of Cæsar warned him of the insecurity of an usurped dominion; and we shall see him, whilst he studiously imitated the clemency of his great predecessor, affect a much greater degree of respect for the pretended rights of that degraded people whom he ruled at the same time with the most absolute authority. He had not yet returned from Egypt when, at Rome, they had already decreed him every honour both human and divine. The title of Imperator was conferred on him for life. His colleague Sextus Apuleius, along with the whole senate, took a solemn oath to obey the emperor's decrees; and it was determined that he should hold the consulate so long as he esteemed it necessary for the interests of the people. Such was the contemptible servility of all ranks of the state, that temples were erected to his honour, and public worship and sacrifice performed at the altars of the "divine Augustus." He, however, with becoming modesty, requested that these honours might be paid to him in the provinces alone, as *at Rome* he should never regard himself but as a private citizen invested with the superintendence of the rights and liberties of the republic. The state being now in profound peace, the temple of Janus, which had remained open since the beginning of the second Punic war—a period of one hundred and eighty-eight years—was shut—an event which occasioned the most universal joy. This single circumstance contributed much to abolish the memory of all those cruelties, proscriptions, and complicated horrors, which had accompanied the triumvirate and the civil wars; and the "infatuated Romans now believed themselves a free people, since they had no longer to fight for their liberty."\*

It was the policy of Augustus to keep up this favourable delusion, by extraordinary marks of indulgence and munificence. He gratified the people by



continually amusing them with their favourite games and spectacles; he affected an extreme regard for all the ancient popular customs; he pretended the utmost deference for the senate; he re-established the Comitia, which the internal commotions of the government had prevented from being regularly held; he flattered the people with the ancient right of electing their own magistrates; if he presented candidates, it was only to give a simple recommendation, under reservation that they should be judged worthy by the people, and the people, on their part, could not but regard as the most certain symptom of desert, the recommendation of so gracious a prince. It was in this manner that Augustus, by the retention of all those empty but ancient appendages of liberty, concealed the form of that arbitrary monarchy which he determined to maintain; and that he thus, with the most hypocritical and specious generosity, contrived, with the machinery of freedom, to accomplish all the purposes of despotism.

After having established an appearance of order in the several departments of the state, Augustus, to complete the farce, affected a wish to abdicate his authority, and return to the rank of a private citizen; but this was a piece of gross affectation. He consulted Mecænas, however, and Marcus Agrippa, whether he ought to follow his inclination. Mecænas, with the most honest, though certainly not the wisest policy, exhorted him to put his design in execution; but Agrippa, more of a courtier, and perhaps having more discernment into the real character of Augustus, or dreading the repetition of those cruel and turbulent scenes which had preceded his exaltation, assured him that the public happiness depended entirely on his continuing to hold the reins of government; and this advice was too consonant to the actual views of Augustus not to be readily embraced.

This seeming moderation, however, increased the popularity of Augustus, and even paved the way for

an extension of his power. The censorship had, for many years, fallen into disuse. Under the pretence of effecting a reformation of various abuses in the several orders of the community, Augustus requested that he might be invested with censorial powers; and having obtained this office, he introduced many improvements in the different departments of the government, which, although salutary in themselves, contributed much to the increase of his own authority. With this daily augmentation of power, he was not without continual alarms for his personal safety. He was naturally timid, and the fate of Cæsar was ever before him. For a considerable time, he never went to the senate-house, without a suit of armour under his robe; he carried a dagger in his girdle; and was always surrounded by ten of the bravest of the senators, on whose attachment he could thoroughly depend. It was much to the credit of Augustus that he reposed an unlimited confidence in Mæcenas—a most able minister, and one who, with the firmest attachment to his sovereign, appears to have always had at heart the interest and happiness of the people. It was by his excellent counsels that Augustus was taught to assume those virtues to which his nature was a stranger; it was to the patronage of Mæcenas that literature and the fine arts owed much of their encouragement and consequent progress; it was by his instructions, by the counsels he inculcated, that the base and inhuman Octavius was transformed into the affable and human Augustus.

In the seventh year of his consulate, Augustus again pretended a desire to abdicate, and he actually informed the senate that he had resigned all authority; but he was now secure of the consequences of this avowal. From those mercenary voices which had, no doubt, been behind the scenes, well trained to this hypocritical farce, there was now one universal cry of supplication, entreating him not to abandon that republic which he had preserved from destruction, and whose

existence depended on his paternal care. "Since it must be so," said he, "I accept the empire for ten years, unless the public peace and tranquillity shall permit me before that time to seek that ease and retirement which I so passionately desire." He would not even consent to take the burden of the whole empire, but entreated that the senate and people should govern a part of the provinces. From the distribution which followed, we learn the extent of the Roman empire at this time. Augustus reserved for his own government Italy, the two Gauls, Spain, Germany, Syria, Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Egypt. To the senate and people were allotted *Africa Proper*, Numidia, Libya, Bithynia, Pontus, Greece, Illyria, Macedonia, Dalmatia, and the Islands of Crete, Sicily, and Sardinia. The provinces of which Augustus retained the government *direct* were those where *the legions* were principally stationed!

The title of Consul, which had been of assistance at first in disguising his power, was now judged unnecessary by Augustus; and the annual ceremony of the renewal of this dignity perhaps recalled too strongly to the minds of the people the irrevocable tenure by which he held it. He resigned it, therefore, in the eleventh year of his consulate; and, as a compensation for this exercise of moderation, the people entreated him to accept of the office of Perpetual Tribune. By this refined policy, every increase of power seemed, so far from any encroachment upon his part, to be forced upon him by the anxious entreaty of the people. In virtue of this last office, he became in all causes, civil as well as criminal, the supreme judge. Formerly in the republic there had never been recognised any right of appeal from any of the courts to the tribunes, but the people, who had always till now considered themselves as possessing the supereminent right of appeal, now voluntarily conferred it upon their perpetual tribune, as their chief magistrate and virtual representative.

Marcellus, the nephew of Augustus, to whom he had given his daughter in marriage, and whom he destined for his successor—a personage of great promise—died at this time, to the unspeakable regret of the Roman people, in the very flower of his youth. He had just completed his twentieth year, and in his talents and disposition had begun to show every indication of a great and a generous prince. He has been immortalized by Virgil in that exquisite eulogium, with which all are acquainted, in the sixth book of his *Æneid*.

Marcus Agrippa was the man who seemed to stand next to this amiable youth in the affection of the emperor. Agrippa had married the niece of Augustus; but, on the death of Marcellus, he caused him to divorce her, and in return gave him his daughter, the widow of Marcellus, in marriage. This lady was the infamous Julia, who afterward became so openly scandalous in her amours, that her father, after informing the senate of his reasons, condemned her to banishment.

Notwithstanding the absolute authority now possessed by Augustus, it was still the policy of this monarch to retain all the exterior forms of a republic. The elections of magistrates were punctually held in the comitia. Consuls were, as usual, annually chosen; and the republic retained its ædiles, its tribunes, its quæstors, and prætors. In the government of Augustus, and in the gradual increase of his authority, the prince, to all appearance, derives his power from the people. After a little, we shall observe the emperor affecting to conceal this truth; and in the sequel, it will be totally forgotten.

While Augustus had thus, step by step, arrived at the summit of power, his son-in-law Agrippa had entirely brought under subjection the Spanish peninsula, where, for nearly two centuries, the Romans had been compelled to a continual struggle. Augustus, to secure his own authority, by firmly attaching to himself

so able a general, associated him with himself in the office of censor. The two censors immediately applied themselves with great vigour to the reformation of abuses. Augustus, perhaps not hypocritically, affected the highest regard to the purity of public morals, although in his own private life he is known to have been profligate and vicious.

The tenth year, the period which he had appointed for laying down his authority, had now arrived. He accordingly did so, and, at the earnest entreaty of the people, again resumed it; and so fond does he appear to have been of this solemn farce, that five times in the course of his government he amused the nation with this empty pageantry of their pretended power. The empire was now again threatened with war, and Augustus set out for Gaul, into which the Germans had begun now to make those irruptions, which proved afterward so fatal to the provinces. Drusus, in the meantime, defeated the Rhætians, a people inhabiting part of the modern Switzerland; and Agrippa restored peace to Asia. In marking the successive steps of despotism, it is not unnecessary to mention that this general was the first who refused the honour of a triumph, which gave rise to this privilege belonging ever afterward only to the emperors; and that he omitted also, for the first time, that customary form of acquainting the senate with the detail of his military operations, corresponding with Augustus alone. In these matters, of course, his example became henceforth the rule.

At this time died Marcus Agrippa, and his widow Julia now took to her third husband, Tiberius, who became thus by a double tie the son-in-law of Augustus, for the emperor had likewise married his mother Livia. Augustus was then at war with the Pannonians, Dacians, and Dalmatians. Tiberius and his brother Drusus commanded the armies against those barbarous tribes with great success; but, to the deep regret of the Romans, their particular favourite died



in Germany, leaving three children, Germanicus, Claudius (afterward emperor), and Julia, married to Caius Cæsar. Caius was the son of Agrippa by Julia, whom Augustus had adopted, along with his brother Lucius. These two princes died soon after, poisoned as it was supposed by Livia, the wife of Augustus, to make way for the succession of her son Tiberius. This dark and ambitious man now bent all his powers to gain the confidence of Augustus, who, upon his return from a successful campaign against the Germans, not only allowed him the honour of a triumph, but associated him with himself in the government of the empire. At the request of Augustus also, the people, accustomed now to unlimited compliance, conferred upon Tiberius the government of the provinces and the supreme command of the armies.

On the ground of his advanced age, the emperor now found an opportunity of shaking off all that dependence upon the senate and people to which his policy had hitherto confined him. He no longer came regularly to the senate, but formed a sort of privy council, consisting of twenty senators, together with the consuls of the year, and the *consules designati*\*—and it was determined in the senate, that the resolutions of this assembly should have the same authority as the *senatus consulta*. Augustus did not long survive this his last and boldest innovation. He died soon after at Nola, in Campania, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, after having, in conjunction with Mark Antony, ruled the Roman republic for nearly twelve, and governed alone as emperor for forty-four years.

In treating of the Roman literature, we observed that high degree of advancement to which it attained under the reign of Augustus; and we may attribute no small part of that lustre which has been thrown

\* The individuals recommended or nominated by the consuls to succeed them in their office.



upon his administration, to the splendid colouring bestowed on his character by the illustrious poets who adorned his court, and repaid his favours by their incense and adulation.

*"Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
Multi, sed omnes illacrymabiles  
Urgentur ignotique longa  
Nocte, carent quia vate sacro."\**

Augustus, by his testament had named Tiberius his heir, together with his mother Livia, and substituted to them Drusus, the son of Tiberius, and Germanicus. Tiberius was no favourite with the body of the people. They knew him to be vicious and debauched, and of a severe and cruel disposition; yet to so low a pitch of degradation had they now fallen, that the very dread of these vices in his character operated so strongly on their servile minds as to secure his succession to the empire without a whisper of opposition. An embassy of the senators was deputed to offer him the reins of government while he was on his return from Illyria. He received them with much affected humility; talked of the burden of so extensive an empire and his own limited ability; pretended uncommon unwillingness to undertake so exalted an office; and, at length, after the usual ceremony of tears and supplication on the part of the senate, was at last prevailed to yield to their entreaties.

Notwithstanding these promising symptoms, this was all the mockery of moderation with which Tiberius ever condescended to flatter the prejudices of the senate or the people; for it soon after appeared that he esteemed the power enjoyed by his predecessor as much too little for his ambition. It was not sufficient for him that the substance of the republic was now gone for ever; the very appearance of it, and all those

\* "Many a hero lived before Agamemnon, but they all died unwept, and were consigned to the long night of oblivion for the want of a divine poet to rehearse their praises."

forms which recalled it to his recollection, were judged necessary to be abolished. Augustus had received from the people the power of legislation, but he left them in return the right of electing their own magistrates, and all the privileges of the comitia. Tiberius at once abolished all these formalities. The people were no longer assembled, yet the emperor did not choose to break entirely with the senate. He frequently affected to consult them, or at least to communicate to them his resolutions, and flattered them still with the possession of a shadow of authority.

The uncertainty of the laws with regard to treason gave at last to Tiberius an opportunity of discovering his natural disposition. Sylla had declared the authors of libels guilty of treason. This law had fallen into disuse under Julius Cæsar, who treated such offences with their merited contempt. Augustus had revived the law; Tiberius, with his usual dissimulation, neither renewed it nor abrogated it. The prætor having asked if he should take cognizance of such offences, the emperor vouchsafed him no other answer than that he should observe the laws; an answer which sufficiently informed the people what they had to expect while Tiberius persuaded himself that he thus avoided all imputation of adopting sanguinary measures.

Meantime, his nephew, Germanicus, who was acquiring great glory by his military exploits in Germany, was recalled by Tiberius, who had become jealous of his popularity with the army. The emperor sent him to the oriental provinces on the pretence of quelling some insurrections, and a short time after he died, as was suspected, of poison administered to him by command of Tiberius. Every vicious prince has his favourite, the minister of his pleasures, and the obsequious instrument of his criminal or tyrannical purposes. Ælius Sejanus was prefect of the prætorian bands, who were the emperor's guards—a body of men amounting then to ten thousand of the flower

of the troops, but who, increasing in number and in political power, became at last the sovereign disposers of the empire. Sejanus, their prefect, acquired at length so complete an ascendant over the mind of Tiberius, that he overcame the natural reserve and suspicion of his temper, and became the confidant of his most secret thoughts. It was not to be wondered at that his minion should entertain the highest views of ambition. He conceived no less a design than to exterminate the whole family of the Cæsars, and his first step was the poisoning of Drusus, the son of Tiberius, which he contrived to execute so secretly that he escaped all suspicion both of the emperor and of the people. His next design was to remove Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, with her two sons, Nero and the younger Drusus. Sejanus accordingly represented Agrippina to Tiberius as a woman of unlimited ambition, and who secretly fomented a party of malcontents in the state as assistants to her own aggrandizement and that of her sons. To this accusation, the natural pride and haughtiness of the temper of Agrippina gave some shadow of colour, and she and Nero, her eldest son, were condemned to banishment, while the younger, Drusus, was confined to prison.

Every day now produced some new information—some pretended charge of treason brought by Sejanus and his infamous minions against the most eminent persons of the court; and the idea that these informations were pleasing to the dark and vindictive mind of the emperor began to multiply them exceedingly. The constant executions for treason, by which Sejanus was daily clearing the way for the accomplishment of his own designs, produced at length such an effect on the gloomy temper of Tiberius, that he believed his life to be in continual danger. At the instigation of Sejanus, he quitted Rome and retired to the Isle of Caprea in the Bay of Naples, carrying with him a few of the senators, and some Greek literati, in whose conversation he professed to find entertainment. It is

said that in this retreat the old tyrant gave himself up to excesses in debauchery which exceed all credibility. It is certain, however, that the severity of his former manner of life was very opposite to such licentiousness of character, and we may naturally presume that the hatred of his subjects, and the concealment which he probably chose from the consideration of personal safety, have given occasion to much aspersion, or at least to great exaggerations on the subject.

Sejanus, meanwhile, had acquired an absolute authority in Rome, and was sovereign in everything but the name. It was but a small step, to a villain of his complexion, to aim likewise at that last acquisition. He formed, therefore, a design to assassinate Tiberius—but the conspiracy was discovered. Such, however, was the influence of Sejanus, that the emperor was obliged to use art and address to bring him to punishment. He at first loaded him with caresses, and caused him to be nominated to the consulate. He then took occasion privately to sound the minds of the people, and hinted some grounds of dissatisfaction with his conduct, which instantly he perceived to cool the zeal of his former flatterers and pretended friends. Convinced now of the ground on which he stood, and certain that this dreaded popularity of Sejanus was hollow, and the effect of power alone, while he was really detested by all ranks in the state, Tiberius deemed it time to throw off the mask. He sent, therefore, an officer to deprive him of the command of the prætorian guards; and accusing him at the same time of treason by a letter to the senate, Sejanus was instantly arrested, condemned to death by acclamation, torn to pieces, and thrown into the Tiber. Tiberius became now more negligent than ever of the cares of government, and confusion prevailed in every department of the state. The magistracies were unsupplied, the distant provinces were without governors, and the Roman name became contemptible. The only exertions of the imperial power were mani-

fested in public executions, confiscations, and the most complicated scenes of cruelty and rapine. At length the empire was delivered from this odious tyrant, who, falling sick at Misenum, was strangled in his bed by Macro, the new prefect, who had succeeded Sejanus in the command of the prætorian cohorts. He was put to death in the 78th year of his age, and the 23d of his reign.

One great event distinguished the reign of Tiberius. In the eighteenth year of that reign, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the son of God, and the divine author of our religion, suffered death upon the cross, a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of mankind. It is said that soon after his death, Pilate, the Jewish governor, wrote to Tiberius an account of his passion, resurrection, and miracles, upon which the emperor made a report of the whole to the senate, desiring that Jesus might be acknowledged a God by the Romans, but that the senate, displeased that the proposal had not come from themselves, refused the emperor's request. This last circumstance utterly discredits the story, for the Roman senate dared not refuse the request of Tiberius. The progress of the Christian religion, from its first institution till the utter extinction of Paganism in the Roman empire, will form the future subject of a connected chapter.

By his testament, the emperor had nominated as his successor Caligula, the son of Germanicus, and his grandson by adoption, together with Tiberius, the son of Drusus, and his grandson by blood. Caligula was, on his father's account, the favourite of the people, and more especially of the soldiers, among whom he had been educated; and the senate to gratify the people, chose to set aside the nomination in favour of Tiberius, and to confer the sovereignty on Caligula alone. His accession to the empire gave, therefore, universal satisfaction; and, for a time, he condescended to maintain this favourable opinion by a few acts of clemency and moderation. He removed the informers who



swarmed through Rome, and had been the bane of the preceding reign. He restored for a while the privileges of the comitia, and he gratified the people still more by their favourite exhibition of public games and shows. But this dawn of sunshine soon gave place to a day of gloom and horror. Caligula, weary of dissimulation, threw off the mask at once. Macro, the murderer of his predecessor, was too dangerous a man to continue long in that favour which this piece of service had placed him in with Caligula—he was accordingly murdered. The young Tiberius, although then no favourite of the people, might become so, when they discovered the real temper of the rival they had preferred to him. He was, therefore, speedily cut off. Caligula had abolished informations on account of treason, but he did so only to facilitate the rapidity of execution, and he now, therefore, required not the formality of an information. He put to death, without assigning even a pretence, whatever person he took a prejudice against. It is inconceivable to what excesses this monster proceeded. His whole reign, with the exception of a few months at its commencement, was one continued and complicated scene of madness and cruelty. “Caligula,” says Montesquieu, “was a true sophist in his cruelty: as he was the descendant of both Antony and Augustus, he was wont to say, that he would punish both those who celebrated the anniversary of the battle of Actium, and those who did not.” Upon the death of his sister, Drusilla, he punished some for mourning for her, because they ought to have known she was a goddess; and put to death others for not mourning, because she was the sister of the emperor.

In addition to all this, Caligula loaded the provinces with the most excessive taxes; and such was his avarice, that every day some of the citizens fell a sacrifice in the confiscations of their property. It would only create disgust were we to enter into any detail of the complicated and ingenious cruelties and the absurd



extravagances of a madman—of the multiplied instances of his folly as well as of his depravity—his ridiculous mock campaigns—the temples he erected in honour of himself, where, in the character of his own priest, he offered sacrifices to himself, sometimes as Jupiter, and sometimes as Juno. One day he chose to be Mercury, the next he was Bacchus or Hercules. At last, in the fourth year of his reign, this monster met with the fate which he deserved, and was assassinated by Chæreas, a tribune of the prætorian guards, in the twenty-ninth year of his age.

The great body of the Roman people and of the senate would now have gladly preferred the restoration of the republic to the continuance of the empire; but the soldiers, who were now all powerful, preferred a military government under an emperor, over whom they begun now to discover that they could have unlimited command. At the time when Caligula was put to death, Claudius his uncle, and the brother of Germanicus, a man whose weak and childish disposition had never cherished an ambitious thought, had concealed himself in a corner of the palace for fear of assassination. A soldier accidentally discovering his retreat, saluted him emperor. While Claudius was tremblingly begging his life to be spared, some others coming up, they put him in a litter and carried him to the camp of the prætorian guards. There, as yet afraid, and uncertain of his fate, he promised to each of the soldiers a large gratification, and received in return their oaths of allegiance. The people approved the choice, and the senate was obliged to confirm it. Thus was the empire *bought for the first time*—a practice which we shall see become in future extremely common.

Claudius at the age of fifty was still a child: his countenance was that of an idiot, and his mind, naturally weak, had never received the smallest tincture of education. He was the son of Octavia, the sister of Augustus; but as he had never been adopted, he

did not belong to the family which carried the names of Cæsar and of Augustus. He assumed, however, both; and they were henceforth considered as *titles* annexed to the imperial power—the reigning emperor being always styled Augustus, and his appointed successor honoured with the title of Cæsar.

Claudius knew that, to become popular, he ought to go counter to every measure of his predecessor. He began, therefore, by abolishing most of his laws. He passed an act of oblivion for all former offences against the state, and he appeared for a while to bend his whole attention to the strict administration of justice and the establishment of good order. He even began to show symptoms of an enterprising disposition, which was quite opposite to all ideas which had been formed of his character from the tenor of his past life; and he undertook to reduce Britain under subjection to the Roman arms, which, in the opinion of Tacitus, Julius Cæsar had rather pointed out than conquered. He accordingly sent thither Plautius, one of his generals, and, encouraged by his success, was induced afterward to go thither in person. But this was entirely an expedition of show and parade. He remained but sixteen days in the island, leaving his lieutenants Plautius and Vespasian to prosecute the war, which continued with various success for many years. The Silures or inhabitants of South Wales, under their king Caradoc or Caractacus, made a most powerful and obstinate resistance. This warlike prince, with great address and military skill, contrived to remove the seat of war into the most inaccessible parts of the country, and for nine years the Romans saw no prospect of reducing this courageous people to subjection. At length, in one unfortunate engagement, the Britons were entirely defeated; the wife and daughter of Caractacus were taken prisoners; and this brave man was afterward treacherously delivered to the Romans by Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes, in whose territories he had sought refuge. He

was soon after conducted to Rome, where he displayed that noble spirit which attracted from all who beheld him at once their respect and admiration. In passing through the streets of that sumptuous capital, and observing the splendour of all the objects around him, "Alas!" exclaimed he, "is it possible that they who possess such magnificence at home should envy Caractacus his poor cottage in Britain?" He appeared undismayed before the tribunal of the emperor, and although he disdained here to sue for pardon or for mercy, yet he was willing for the good of his people to accept of it; and Claudius, it must be acknowledged, treated him with a generous humanity.

The commencement of this reign promised extremely well; but what possible dependance could there be on a man so weak as to be guided by the lowest officers of his court. The servants and the freedmen of Claudius had such an ascendant over him, that they obtained from him the offices of the utmost importance in the empire. The meanest of his domestics were appointed judges in the different tribunals, and governors of the provinces. These dishonourable and avaricious wretches reduced peculation to a system, and filled every corner of the empire with loud complaints of their rapine and extortion. Messalina, also, the vicious and abandoned wife of Claudius, urged him on to various acts of injustice and cruelty. This woman was infamous for all manner of vices. Her debaucheries, which were quite notorious in Rome, exceed all belief; but, what is the most surprising part of her character, she had the address to pass with Claudius as a paragon of virtue. She at length, however, proceeded to that height of effrontery, that during a short absence of Claudius she publicly married Caius Silius, and upon the emperor's return, made him, by way of jest, to sign the marriage contract. Narcissus, his freedman, soon made him sensible that the matter was too serious, by informing him that the people no longer looked upon him as emperor: utter-

ly unable to act for himself, he now entreated that Narcissus would take any steps he judged best for his interest; and his favourite, thus invested with authority, immediately secured the prætorian guards, and caused Messalina and Silius her gallant to be both put to death. Claudius now, by the advice of his faithful counsellors, his freedmen, married his niece Agrippina, the daughter of Germanicus, a woman equally vicious as Messalina, and more daring in her crimes. Her favourite object was to secure the empire for her son Domitius Ænobarbus. In the prosecution of her scheme she employed banishment, poison, murder—every different engine of vice and inhumanity. She obliged Octavia, the emperor's daughter, to marry Domitius, whom she now made Claudius adopt, to the prejudice of his son Britannicus; and Domitius was hailed Cæsar, with the titles of *Nero Claudius Cæsar Drusus Germanicus*. She gave him for his preceptor Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, from whose instructions he reaped no other benefit than an ostentatious display of taste and erudition, without possessing any tincture of either. Agrippina, having by these complicated crimes paved the way for the succession of her son to the throne, now thought proper to make way for him by poisoning her husband; and Claudius, after a reign of fourteen years, was thus carried off at the age of sixty-three.

The succession of Nero was immediate. The captain of the prætorian guards presented him to the soldiers; he promised them a considerable donative, and in return was proclaimed emperor—the senate, with their usual passive compliance, confirming the choice. Nero began, like some of his predecessors, upon a good plan, but unfortunately it was not his own. His preceptor, the celebrated Seneca, had acquired such influence over him, that the first few years of his reign promised a revival of the times of Augustus; but his natural disposition could not long be restrained. With Seneca, who prompted his decrees and kept him with-

in the bounds of moderation, he appeared in public a wise and amiable prince, yet at this very time it was his favourite amusement to range through the streets of Rome with a band of young debauchees, indulging themselves in every species of outrage and disorder. His natural disposition first publicly showed itself in an indolent neglect of all the cares of government; and his mother, Agrippina, took advantage of this disposition by ruling everything as she chose. Seneca warned his pupil of the danger of allowing free course to the views of this ambitious and unprincipled woman, and his first step was to dismiss from the court her chief favourites and confidants. The violence of Agrippina prompted her to seek an outrageous revenge. She proposed to bring Britannicus to the prætorian bands, and to acknowledge before them the crimes she had committed to place Nero on the throne. The emperor prevented the execution of this purpose by poisoning Britannicus, while he sat at supper with himself; but he sought against his mother a more refined vengeance. She was invited to Baiæ, to celebrate the feast of Bacchus. The ship in which she sailed was constructed in such a manner as to burst and fall to pieces at sea; but the machinery failed, and Agrippina came safe ashore. Nero, enraged at the disappointment of his stratagem, ordered one of his freedmen to assassinate her.

As he was now rid of those anxieties which arose from his dread of the designs of Agrippina, and had nothing material to occupy his mind (for he disdained the proper cares of empire), he gave a loose to the meanest and most vicious passions. He prompted the young nobility to exhibit themselves as actors upon the stage; he forced the Roman knights to fight, like gladiators, in the arena; and in these disgraceful amusements he bore himself a principal part. Burrhus, the captain of the prætorian guards, a man of talents and virtue—although, at times, he had appeared to show too much compliance with the will of his



master—was not, in the opinion of Nero, sufficiently obsequious, and was therefore removed by poison. Upon his death, Seneca, who lost a powerful friend, retired from the court. Nero had no longer any around him but the profligate and abandoned like himself. Poppæa, a woman of great beauty, but abandoned morals, had been seduced from her husband by Otho, who introduced her to the emperor, to serve his own purposes of ambition. She soon gained such an ascendant over Nero, that he was induced to divorce his wife Octavia to make way for her to the throne; and such was, at this time, the infamous servility of the Roman senate, that a panegyric was pronounced in praise of the emperor, and a deputation sent to congratulate him on this auspicious event.

A conspiracy, which was at this time discovered, gave Nero ample scope for the gratification of the natural cruelty of his disposition. The slightest suspicion of guilt was now punished with immediate death. It was a sufficient crime if a man was seen to have saluted a suspected person. Seneca, among others, was accused of having been privy to this conspiracy; and, as a mark of the emperor's gratitude for past services of his preceptor, he was permitted to choose the manner of his death. He chose to expire in a warm bath, after having his veins opened.

Nero, intoxicated with his own accomplishments as a gladiator and combatant in the arena, was not content with the applause of Rome: he determined now to show himself in Greece, where he contended for, and consequently gained, the prize at the Olympic and Pythian games. On his return to the capitol, he celebrated a splendid triumph, where he commanded himself to be hailed by the titles of Hercules and Apollo.

It becomes painful to enumerate a long series of extravagant instances of every variety of vice, and multiplied examples of the most complicated and capricious cruelty. The tyranny of this monster at length



found an end. Vindex, an illustrious Gaul, by his interest with his countrymen as proprætor, excited them to a general revolt. He offered the empire to Galba, then governor of Spain, who took upon himself the title of Lieutenant of the Senate and People of Rome. The provinces declared in his favour. Rome was divided, and at length the party of Vindex prevailed. Nero, abandoned by his guards, was obliged to conceal himself in the house of one of his freedmen. The senate proclaimed him an enemy to his country, and condemned him to die *more majorem*; that is, to be scourged, thrown from the Tarpeian rock, and then flung into the Tiber. Unable to bear the thoughts of such a death, Nero tried the points of two daggers, but wanted courage to die by his own hand. He entreated the aid of one of his slaves, who was not slow in the performance of that friendly office, and was in this manner put to death, after a reign of fourteen years, in the thirtieth year of his age; a character happily difficult to be paralleled in the annals of human nature.

In the time of the civil wars, the generals of the republic were certain of the obedience of their troops. They were devoted to their chiefs, and although expecting a recompense, they never dared to claim it as their due. Things had now entirely changed. A long state of servitude had annihilated every generous sentiment. Even the names of the ancient Roman families were lost. The soldiers now saw nothing in Rome but a despicable senate, a servile populace, and immense riches, of which last they soon found that they were the supreme disposers. The prætorian guards had now everything at their command. Galba was of an ancient and illustrious family. He had conducted himself honourably in the government of several of the provinces, but old age had unfortunately turned to avarice a disposition naturally economical, and his manners, rigid from his life and constitution, were now become severe and cruel. He was

seventy-three years of age when he was proclaimed emperor. He had scarcely arrived in Italy, when his conduct entirely alienated the affections of the army to whom he owed his elevation. He disappointed them of the reward they expected, telling them that an emperor should choose his soldiers, and not purchase them. The people too, who, in the time of Nero, had been constantly amused with games and public shows, could not easily brook the loss of their favourite spectacles. In other instances, the new emperor scrupled not to add injustice to his imprudence. Without the form of a trial, he stripped many of the richest citizens of their fortunes, on pretence of their having been improperly acquired under Nero.

The army in Germany were the first to evince a spirit of disaffection and mutiny, and openly expressed their desire of electing another emperor. Galba began to feel his own weakness, and to be sensible that his favourite passion had impelled him into a wrong course. He wished to find a support in the abilities and talents of the young Piso, who was distinguished both by his illustrious birth and by his eminent virtues. He adopted him, therefore, as his son, and destined him to be his successor in the empire; but, unfortunately for the public welfare, this measure came too late. Otho, the husband of Poppæa, and the rival of Piso, was of a character as deservedly infamous as the other was truly respectable. He was jealous of the destined honours of Piso, and determined to risk anything to destroy him. He was immersed in debt, and had no means of escaping ruin but by some desperate attempt. It was to him a matter of indifference, he used to declare, how he died—whether by the sword of the enemy or the hand of the executioner. With this genius, and in such a disposition of mind, it was not surprising that he should harbour schemes of the highest and most daring import. He flattered his partisans by telling them that certain wise astrologers had given him a promise of the empire; and, as the

securest engine of policy, he was lavish of his promises to the soldiers. He prevailed upon some of the boldest of the guards to take the active part in accomplishing his designs. On a day appointed, they carried him to the prætorian camp, where he was proclaimed emperor. Galba and Piso were both murdered in attempting to quell the tumult, and their heads were presented to Otho, who, it is said, gave early demonstrations of his sanguinary disposition by the exultation with which he received them. Galba had only reigned for the short space of seven months.

Otho, although he had found it an easy matter to induce the senate to confirm the election of the soldiers, was not without a competitor for the empire. Before the murder of Galba, Vitellius, who commanded in Germany, had been proclaimed emperor by his troops. He had arrived at authority by the same means as Otho, with a character, if possible, yet more deeply infamous. He possessed himself no military talents; but this want was supplied by the abilities of his generals, Cæcina and Valens. The art of war, during the long peace which had continued, with little intermission, since the accession of Augustus, was now, in some measure, lost in Italy. The prætorian guards were lazy, licentious, ignorant of their duty, and completely debauched by the successive donatives of the emperors. It was no wonder that the apprehension of a civil war should have struck terror into the breasts of all who deserved the name of Roman citizens. They had no heroes to look to for their commanders—no troops animated, as formerly, by the love of glory and of their country. There existed, however, many degraded and desperate men, who were pleased with this prospect, in the hopes of profiting by the public ruin; while those cowardly minds, which composed the bulk of the citizens, were depressed with fear, or sunk in indolence and despondency.

Vitellius was at first unsuccessful in his pretensions to the empire. Cæcina and Valens did not act in con-

cert; and Otho, had he possessed one spark of Roman spirit, would have found it easy to crush his rival in the beginning. He was resolved, at length, to hazard a decisive battle, but he had not courage to head the troops in person. His army was defeated at Bedriacum, between Mantua and Cremona, where above forty thousand men fell on each side. Otho might still have retrieved matters. Since his accession he had ingratiated himself with the soldiers, who earnestly urged him to continue the war. He had even gained, by an appearance of moderation, some affection from the people; and with these supports he might yet, by one vigorous effort, have foiled his ambitious rival. But despair had taken possession of him: his resolution was fixed, and no persuasion could alter it. For this resolution he assigned those generous motives of preventing the effusion of blood, and preserving the lives of his subjects; for which, unfortunately, the tenor of his former life will hardly permit us to give him credit. It must be owned, however, that his death was heroic. He gave his last orders with the utmost composure, provided as well as he could for the safety of his friends, whom he entreated to make a timely submission to the conqueror; like Cato, went to rest, slept with tranquillity, and, on awaking, fell upon his own sword. He had reigned for three months with considerable moderation, but the known vices of his character gave too much reason to believe that this short period of good administration would have been like the deceitful prelude of Nero.

Rome was now in the hands of a brutal tyrant, who affected no disguise to conceal his natural disposition. Vitellius was abandoned to every species of vicious debauchery. It is sufficient to paint his character to say, that he expressed a most devoted regard for the memory of *Nero*. Fortunately, this reign was not of long continuance.

Vespasian, a man of obscure family, but possessed of strong native talents, had raised himself by servile

offices under Caligula and Claudius, and had at length arrived at the consulship. Under Nero he had obtained the command of the army in the war against the Jews, and had conducted it with equal courage and ability. The legions he commanded in the East taking offence, very naturally, when they perceived their fellow-soldiers disposing of the empire at pleasure, and enjoying in ease all the fruits of this exercise of power, thought it time for themselves, in their turn, to choose an emperor. Vespasian was persuaded by Mucianus, the governor of Syria, to offer himself a candidate, on the usual terms of a large donative. The soldiers proclaimed him, and he was immediately acknowledged over all the East. A great part of Italy submitted to his generals; and Vitellius, within a few months of his succession, saw himself reduced to the alternative of resigning the empire, or of dying like his predecessor. He chose the former, and immediately concluded a shameful treaty with Sabinus, the brother of Vespasian, then prefect of Rome, by which he saved his life; obtaining, in return for his resignation of the empire, the liberty of retiring to Campania, with a considerable yearly pension. This treaty the dastardly emperor read himself to the people, crying all the while like a child. He then submissively prepared to strip himself of all the ensigns of authority. The spirit of the citizens was roused at this self-degradation. They compelled him to return to his palace, and attacked the party of Sabinus, who retired to the capitol. They burnt down the temple of Jupiter, seized Sabinus, and put him to death at the feet of Vitellius. In the meanwhile Priscus, one of the generals of Vespasian, arriving with his army at the very time when the whole city was employed in the celebration of the Saturnalia, took immediate possession, without any opposition. Neither the consideration of glory nor of safety were sufficient to call off the minds of this miserable and degraded people from their favourite amusements. Vitellius was found concealed



in the chamber of a slave. He was brought into the forum with a rope about his neck, loaded with reproaches, and ignominiously put to death, in the eighth month of his reign.

Vespasian was among those few princes whose character has changed to the better on their arrival at empire. Augustus, from a vicious and cruel man, became, if not a virtuous, in many respects an admirable, prince. Vespasian had ingratiated himself by the most servile flattery with Caligula and Claudius, and raised himself by degrees from the meanest station to rank and distinction. His character, before he came to the empire, was at the best an equivocal one; but no sooner did he mount the throne, than all these suspicions were at once shown to be unfounded. He gave a general pardon to all who had been found in arms against him. He allowed every citizen, provided he spoke only of his own grievances, to have free access to his person, but declared war against that vile race of pensioned informers, which had multiplied so exceedingly during the preceding reigns. His manners were simple, but his administration evinced both vigour and discernment. It was his custom every summer, when he could procure a respite from the busy scenes of the state, to retire to a small country-house he had at Reti, where his mother lived, where he had been himself born, and which he took a pleasure to preserve in the same humble appearance in which he had known it in the days of his infancy. Under this reign, the senate, had any ancient virtue remained in that body or in Rome, might have recovered its former lustre. Vespasian communicated all affairs to that body. He also, in conjunction with his son Titus, applied himself to complete the number of the senators, as well as that of the Roman knights, which body had been diminished, and almost exterminated, by the tyranny of his predecessors.

The avarice of Vespasian is the only vice which sullies his imperial character. He renewed many of the

most odious of the taxes of Galba, and added some others equally grievous; and yet the low state of the public funds, and the laudable purposes to which he uniformly applied the public money, may perhaps form some apology for this single vice. Under this reign was terminated the war with the Jews. They had been brought under the Roman yoke by Pompey, who had taken Jerusalem; under Augustus they were for some time governed by Herod as viceroy; but the tyranny of his son Archelaus provoked Augustus to banish him, and to reduce Judæa into the ordinary state of a Roman province. The stubborn character of that people was ill fitted for obedience to governors whose religion they held in abhorrence. They were continually rebelling on the slightest occasion. Nero had sent Vespasian to reduce them into order, and he had completed the subjugation of the whole country except the capital, when he was summoned to the cares of empire. He left the charge of the war to his son Titus, who concluded it by the taking of Jerusalem. That ill-fated city, whose ruin—doomed by the Almighty and predicted by prophets—was accomplished rather by the intemperate zeal and inflexible obstinacy of its inhabitants than by the arms of its enemies, was carried by storm, after every means had been in vain tried by the humane Titus to persuade the Jews to surrender. The temple was burnt to ashes, and the city buried in ruins.

Vespasian now shut the temple of Janus, and associated his son Titus with himself in power. He conferred upon him the command of the prætorian guards, and employed him as his counsellor and first minister. At the age of sixty-nine, he began to feel the approaches of his decay, and, falling sick, retired to his little country-seat at Reti, where, although sensible that his death was near, he continued still to occupy himself uninterruptedly with the cares of government. "An emperor," he said, "ought to die standing," and

thus in truth died Vespasian, after a prosperous and able reign of nine years and eleven months.

His son Titus had early evinced the most favourable dispositions. The abilities of his mind were equal to his personal accomplishments, and the qualities of his heart were inferior to neither. He seemed born to form the happiness of his people. He possessed heroism sufficient to have revived the ancient splendour of the Romans, and that tempered with an humanity and moderation which are but too rarely its attendants. Such was certainly his genuine character; for those who mention a few follies of his youth, as the indications of a vicious disposition, should remember what were the manners of the courts of Claudius and Nero in which he received his education. The intemperate follies of youth were soon abandoned for the care of his people, whose happiness became, from the moment of his accession, his only study. He removed from all employments such as were of dubious or dishonourable character. He continued in office every man of virtue whom his father had employed. Yet, with the strictness of moral feeling where it might conduce to the welfare of his people, his temper was far from being rigid. He knew the taste of the nation for their favourite amusements, and the amphitheatre which he built was of magnificence suitable to the grandeur of the empire.

In the first year of the reign of Titus, happened that most remarkable eruption of Mount Vesuvius which overwhelmed the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and in which the elder Pliny lost his life, from an earnest curiosity to be a near witness of that striking spectacle. He had determined to embellish his Natural History with a description of that most interesting phenomenon, and for this purpose rushed eagerly into that situation of danger from which others were as eagerly attempting to escape. He was there suffocated by a cloud of sulphureous vapour. His nephew, the younger Pliny, has given a vivid description

of this remarkable scene, in a letter to Tacitus the historian, (lib. vi. epist. 16.) Of the character of his uncle he says, with justice, "Equidem beatos puto quibus Deorum munere datum est aut facere scribenda, aut scribere legenda; beatissimos vero quibus utrumque. Horum in numero meus."\* The desolation of Campania occasioned by this terrible eruption of Vesuvius was remedied to the utmost by the beneficence of Titus, who set apart large funds for the relief of the sufferers. In order to judge of their losses, he went himself to Campania, and by a kind of fatality, while absent on this benevolent expedition, a fire, which broke out in the city, desolated a great part of Rome. The losses occasioned to his subjects, by these reiterated calamities, he repaired at his own charges, not from the public money, which is generally the treasury of the prince's bounties, but from the sale of the superfluous ornaments and riches of his palaces. Thus this virtuous prince occupied himself by every means which generosity or benevolence could dictate in diffusing happiness among all classes of his subjects, when, to their unspeakable regret, he was cut off in the third year of his reign. He died at the age of forty, leaving behind him that most merited and exalted epithet, *Deliciæ humani generis*;—*the delight of the human race*.

Titus was suspected to have been poisoned by his brother Domitian, a character in every respect the reverse of his. The monster—for such his life declared him—contrived, like some of his unworthy predecessors, for a while to conceal his vices. He affected to show a moderation and a love of justice, which gave promise of a happy reign; but his natural disposition soon unveiled itself. An insurrection, which happened

\* "I esteem those the truly happy of mankind to whom the gods have allotted either to do things worthy of being written, or to write things worthy of being read. The happiest are they who have done both; and among those was my relative."

at that time in Germany, gave him an opportunity of satiating himself with blood. The rebellion itself was speedily quelled, but its consequences were long dreaded in the innumerable murders of the most respected among the citizens, for which the bare suspicion of having been concerned in the rebellion afforded always a sufficient pretext.

Informers, that despicable brood, the scourge of men of worth, began again to swarm throughout the country; slaves were bribed to give evidence against their masters; pretenders to astrology were appointed to draw the horoscopes of the principal citizens, the emperor ordering those to be put to death to whom fortune promised anything great or successful.

Could the people have slept in quiet under the constant dread of a sentence of death, they might have been abundantly gratified in their darling amusements of games and shows. In these the new emperor squandered prodigious sums; but the expenses were in truth furnished by the unhappy citizens, whom he loaded with the most exorbitant taxes. It was the lot of Domitian, as of other tyrants, to be haunted by the continual dread of assassination. Fortunately for the world, his fears were at last realized; a conspiracy was formed in the heart of his palace, the emperess, as is said, conducting the plot, and he was assassinated after a cruel and inglorious reign of fifteen years. Under this reign flourished Martial the epigrammatist, from whose venal praises if we were to judge of the character of Domitian, we should believe him one of the best and greatest of princes.

In the time of Domitian the empire was engaged in a variety of wars; the only one of these which ended honourably for the Romans was that carried on in Britain. A detail of its operations belongs more properly to the sketch which we shall have to give of the earliest periods of the history of our own country. The conspirators who had put to death Domitian raised Cocceius Nerva to the throne. He was born at



Narni, in Umbria, of a Cretan family, and was the first emperor who was not a Roman. He was, when elected, approaching to the age of seventy—a man, certainly, of worth and virtue, but too weak for the burden of government. His pliant disposition permitted all excesses. Under Domitian everything was construed into a crime; under the reign of Nerva nothing. The troops, who were fond of Domitian's memory, because he had been lavish of his bounties, demanded that his murderers should be punished. Nerva had not the resolution to refuse, and they put to death, under his eyes, those very persons who had given him the empire. Conscious of his own weakness, he, in order to secure himself upon the throne, adopted the virtuous Trajan, who was then carrying on war in Pannonia, and had never entertained any views of such exaltation. The empire was governed for some months by Trajan, till the death of Nerva, which happened soon after. He had reigned only sixteen months.

Trajan was, in every respect, worthy of the throne, for he possessed all those peculiar talents and those higher virtues which ought to adorn a sovereign. He was born of a respectable, though not an ancient family:—his father had been consul. He perfectly understood the art of war, and he soon re-established, upon his succeeding to the empire, the ancient military discipline, which, of late, had been nearly forgotten. He marched always on foot, at the head of his troops; underwent every fatigue in common with them; and shared the same simple fare. Under such a general, it is no wonder the Roman arms should have regained their ancient splendour. His first war was against the Dacians, to whom Domitian had pusillanimously subjected the empire to pay an annual tribute. Trajan shook off this shameful imposition, and in a few campaigns entirely subdued that warlike nation. A lasting monument of his victories in the Dacian war still remains in that magnificent column at Rome

which bears the name of Trajan, and which is decorated with his exploits in beautiful sculpture.

Chosroes, king of the Parthians, had disposed of the crown of Armenia. Trajan, considering this as an invasion of the rights of the Roman empire, marched against him, subdued his whole territories, took his capital of Ctesiphon, and brought under submission Mesopotamia, Syria, and Arabia Felix. This love of conquest he, however, carried too far; and it was the more blameable in a prince who had every requisite for rendering his people happy under the blessings of peace. It is said that he regretted he was not as young as Alexander, that he might have vied with him in the extent of his conquests. He should have rather remembered that the empire was already too large, and felt the difficulty of defending its extensive frontier. Yet, influenced as he was by this ruling passion, his attention to the cares of government, and his management of all matters connected with the state, were truly admirable. It was customary for the emperor to be named consul the year following his accession. Trajan refused it, as he was then at a distance in the provinces. On his return, he went through all the forms of the ancient procedure for the election of magistrates, with the utmost scrupulousness. These had long been discontinued by his predecessors. He called the comitia, presented himself as a candidate, and at his election, besides the customary oaths, he invoked the powers of Heaven to strengthen him in the performance of his duty.

He was liberal in his donations to the people, but they were not, like those of other emperors, the mean bribes of a despot; they were the largesses of a beneficent prince, for the support of the wretched and indigent. The children of the poor were educated at his expense; and it was computed that two millions of destitute persons were maintained from his private purse. These charges were supplied by a well-ordered economy in his own fortune, and a regular adminis-

tration of the public finances. He lived himself always with ancient simplicity, and he enriched the state by a careful attention to the minutest articles of public expenditure. Under this excellent mode of government everything enjoyed its due consideration. The literary ornaments of the court of Trajan were Pliny the younger, the poet Juvenal, and those excellent writers, Tacitus and Plutarch. Their talents and genius were encouraged and liberally rewarded, while the fine arts also were assiduously cultivated, and flourished under that generous spirit of freedom and independence which prevailed throughout every branch of the state. Trajan himself, amid the duties of sovereignty, enjoyed the greatest happiness which could belong to a private station. He walked through the streets of Rome, without guard or attendant, as a private individual, more secure in the love and affection of his subjects, than in the strength of an imperial retinue. He lived with his friends on terms of the most familiar intercourse; he shared in all their amusements; and there was between them an interchange of every kind and affectionate duty. Such was the virtuous and venerable Trajan, whose character so justly merited the surname universally given him, *Trajanus Optimus*, (the most excellent Trajan). He died at the age of sixty-three, after a reign of nineteen years, a period during which Rome may be said to have been truly happy.

Ælius Adrianus, on the pretence of having been adopted by Trajan in his last moments, took advantage of his command of the army then at Antioch, and prevailed with them to proclaim him emperor. Trajan had been his tutor, and had given him his grand-niece in marriage. These circumstances gave a colourable title to his pretence of adoption, and the senate, therefore, did not think proper to dispute his right. It was the first measure of his reign to abandon all the conquests of Trajan. He restored to the Parthians the election of an independent sovereign; established

Chosroes in his dominions; withdrew the Roman garrisons from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria; and, in compliance with the precept of Augustus, once more confined the Eastern empire within the bounds of the Euphrates. For this conduct various motives have been assigned. It has been ascribed to envy of the glory of his predecessor; but Gibbon justly observes, that he could scarcely place the superiority of Trajan in a more conspicuous light, than by thus confessing himself unequal even to retain what the former had subdued. Indolence, and an aversion to war, have been brought forward as his motives, but Adrian was, in fact, an excellent soldier, equally fearless of danger or of fatigue. It is certainly more natural and reasonable to ascribe to policy and prudence, a measure which eventually was conducive to the happiness and security of the state. The Parthians, he well knew, could not, from the natural strength of their country, be long kept under the yoke. Adrian foresaw in Parthia the future cradle of numerous and destructive wars, and he preferred the peace and security of the empire to this destructive prospect.

On his return to Rome, his conduct was such as to ingratiate himself with every rank of the citizens. He remitted all the debts due to the treasury for the last sixteen years, by burning the records and obligations. He bestowed liberal presents upon those among the ancient families who had fallen into indigence, and appointed new funds for the maintenance and education of the children of the poor. He then undertook a progress through all the provinces of the empire, repressing abuses, and studiously relieving the people wherever he found the taxes too heavy or exorbitant. He rebuilt many cities which had been destroyed or had fallen into ruin. Among the rest he rebuilt Jerusalem, which he named *Ælia Capitolina*. In these progresses through his dominions, so careful was he in avoiding everything which might distress the provinces, that he used no equipage or show, but

travelled on foot, and lived with the frugality of a common soldier. This exemplary conduct made him beloved and respected by his subjects, as much as he was formidable to the enemies of the empire from his courage and resolution. His popularity became so great, that he stood not in need of the ensigns of power and authority. The guards, and the fasces, he deemed superfluous to him who made it his study to reign, not over the persons, but over the hearts of his subjects. Although, certainly, a few instances of severity had clouded the commencement of his reign, yet these were dictated by necessity while his authority was insecure. No sooner was he firmly seated on the throne, than his clemency and bounty were extended to all ranks of his subjects. To the talents of an experienced captain and a skilful politician, Adrian joined an excellent taste in the liberal arts, and a strong disposition toward the advancement of science and polite literature. He was an admirer of poetry, music, and painting, and was himself a proficient in those arts. He seemed endowed with a universal genius, not only being eminent for those nobler qualities which constitute the higher virtues of an emperor, but for those inferior, but not less attractive, graces which accompany an accomplished and cultivated mind. Envy has certainly stained the memory of this great prince with some immoralities; but, as for the truth of these there appears no foundation, it is becoming in the historian rather to bury them in oblivion, than to transmit even the suspicion of them to posterity. On the whole, the reign of Adrian was to the Roman people a period of unusual splendour, attended with what it seldom brings along with it—uncommon public happiness.

In the twenty-second and last year of his reign, he adopted and declared for his successor Titus Aurelius Antoninus, a man of exemplary character and exalted merit. But not satisfied with this immediate instance of regard for posterity, he declared Aurelius his successor, on condition that he should, in his turn, adopt



Annus Verus, a young man every way worthy of the throne, and to whom it should descend on his decease. These two were the Antonines, who for forty years governed the Roman empire with consummate wisdom, ability, and rectitude. Soon after having made this valuable bequest to his country, Adrian fell into a lingering and mortal disease. It was under the pressure of this disease, and in full conviction of his approaching dissolution, that he wrote those beautiful and well-known lines addressed to his soul, which bear so strongly the mark of a tranquil and philosophic mind convinced of its immortality, but anxious for its unknown destination.

Animula vagula, blandula,  
Hospes, comesque corporis,  
Quæ nunc abibis in loca ;  
Pallidula, frigida, nudula—  
Nec ut soles dabis joca ?\*

We have now arrived at the age of the Antonines, the short remaining period of the union and prosperity of the Roman Empire.

\* Pope's translation, or rather paraphrase, of these lines is well known. The following is a literal version :—

“ Poor little gentle, wandering soul,  
Guest and companion of the body,  
Say where wouldst thou depart to now ;  
Pallid, cold, and almost powerless—  
Why utterest not thy jests, as was thy wont ?”

## CHAPTER II.

Age of the Antonines—Commodus—Pertinax—The Prætorian Guards sell the Empire by auction—Four Emperors proclaimed—Severus marches to Rome and disbands the Prætorian Guards—War in Britain—Severus dies at York—Caracalla—Disorders in the Empire continue till the reign of Diocletian—Constantine—His zeal for Christianity.

THE reign of Antoninus Pius offers but few remarkable events to the pen of the historian, as, indeed, generally do such reigns as are the most happy. His character was that of the true philosopher, and the father of his people. He was likewise an excellent politician, and his attention to the cares of the state was indefatigable. Among others of his wise regulations may be reckoned that law which prohibited any person once acquitted to be tried again for the same crime. Generous to others, and himself perfectly disinterested, he bestowed his whole private fortune in repairing the losses and alleviating the calamities of the wretched. As he was secure of his authority, which was firmly seated in the affections of his people, he had no mean jealousy of the power of his ministers and magistrates; he raised the dignity and character of the senate, by regulating his own conduct according to its directions in the administration of all public affairs. The love and esteem of his subjects were only equalled by the respect entertained for his character by foreign nations. He was made the umpire of the differences of contending states, and received the voluntary homage of princes over whom he had no other authority than what the admiration of his wisdom and eminent virtues bestowed. This excellent prince, the idol of his subjects, died in the seventy-fourth year of his age, after a happy and prosperous reign of twenty-two years. He had, in the beginning of his reign, given his daughter Faustina, together with the title of Cæsar, to his successor, who

had been pointed out by Adrian, Annius Verus, a man in every respect worthy to fill his place.

Annius was of an ancient and honourable family. On his accession to the empire, he changed this name for that of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and he bestowed that of Verus upon Lucius Commodus, his brother by adoption. The Stoical philosophy was, at this time, in Rome the most prevalent of all the sects. It gained credit with men of worth and probity from its opposition to the licentious manners of the times. Marcus Aurelius was by nature attached to this philosophy, still more than by education. His morals were pure, his manners simple, and his virtues the result of his natural disposition. His *Meditations*, which are still extant, and which were composed amid the tumult of a military life, abound with the most exalted and beautiful sentiments of piety and morality.

Antoninus had preferred M. Aurelius to Lucius Verus, with whose vicious disposition he was well acquainted. Yet the generosity of Marcus made him hasten to admit this unworthy brother to a share in the empire—an action which can admit of no justification. Rome had now, in fact, two emperors; and those who loved their country prayed as earnestly for the life of Marcus Aurelius as they did that Verus might not survive him. The Parthians, judging the death of Antoninus Pius a favourable opportunity to attack the empire, entered Armenia, and there cut to pieces the Roman army. They proceeded thence to ravage Syria, and an inroad was made at the same time by the Catti into Germany. Marcus Aurelius sent L. Verus against the Parthians, but that debauched and abandoned youth trusted to his generals the whole conduct of the expedition, whilst he himself spent his time between Antioch and Laodicea in the lowest exercises. His generals, however, were victorious, and he, proud of the laurels he had not won, returned at the head of his troops into Italy, where he

carried with him a most dreadful pestilence which almost depopulated that country, and continued to rage for many years from province to province through the whole empire.

During this calamity many of the German nations took up arms—the Vandals, Dacians, Quadi, Suevi, and Alemanni. They laid waste Pannonia, and thence penetrated into Greece, where they ravaged even the Peloponnesus. In this concurrence of misfortunes, the public finances were exhausted to afford the requisite succours; and Aurelius, instead of the usual resource of increasing the taxes, adopted the generous expedient of divesting himself of his whole fortune to supply the deficiency, and sold for the public benefit even the furniture of his palaces. It was necessary to take immediate measures for reducing the rebellion in Germany. The emperor, who had now experienced the disposition of L. Verus, could neither venture to trust him with the command of the army, nor with the equally important task of governing Rome in his absence. He therefore, in concert with the senate, obtained from them a decree, that both the Augusti should march against the revolted nations. They accordingly set out together for Aquileia, but Marcus Aurelius was in a few months happily deprived of his colleague, and the empire of its fears, by the death of Verus. Of this German war historians have furnished us with no detail; Marcus Aurelius, we know, finished it in a few campaigns, and had granted the rebellious nations favourable terms of peace, when he was recalled to Italy by the revolt of Avidius Cassius, who, upon a false report of his death, had caused himself to be proclaimed emperor. This insurrection, however, was speedily terminated by the death of Cassius, who was murdered by one of his own officers.

Aurelius now undertook a progress into Asia, where some disorders had made his presence necessary. Here he received the homage of all the eastern nations. He appeared, says an ancient author of that

time, like a benevolent deity, diffusing around him universal peace and happiness; he was absent from Rome seven years, and his return was celebrated by the sincerest joy of his people.

His last military expedition was against the Marcomanni, and others of the German nations, who had again taken up arms. He had proceeded far to the reduction of these obstinate rebels, whom he must soon have brought under subjection, when, to the unspeakable grief and loss of the empire, he died in Pannonia, in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and the nineteenth of his reign. His memory was long revered by posterity, and above a century after his death many persons preserved the image of Marcus Aurelius among their household gods. From the death of Domitian, which happened in the 96th year of the Christian era, to that of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, which took place in the 180th, a period of eighty-four years, the Roman empire had enjoyed the greatest prosperity and happiness. It was governed by absolute power, but this power was under the direction of wisdom and virtue. "The armies," says Gibbon, "were restrained by the firm, yet gentle hand of five successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Trajan, Adrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honour of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.

Commodus was born soon after the elevation of his father Marcus Aurelius to the throne. He inherited none of the virtues of Aurelius, but resembled much his mother Faustina, a princess second only to Messalina in every species of vice. It was almost the only weakness of M. Aurelius, that he was blind to the infamous character of his wife and son. He even



conferred honours and titles on those whom all but himself knew to be the acknowledged gallants of Faustina; and by a blameable innovation, he had caused his son Commodus to be declared Augustus in his own life-time. Commodus was in his twentieth year, when, by the death of his father, he succeeded to the throne. His first step was to purchase a disgraceful peace with the barbarians in Germany—impatient to get rid, without the fatigue of fighting, of the trouble of a war. From his infancy he had discovered an aversion to whatever was rational or liberal, and an excessive attachment to the amusements of the populace, the sports of the circus and amphitheatre, the combats of gladiators, and the hunting of wild beasts. It was his highest and only ambition to excel in these exercises: he fought as a common gladiator in the circus; and his favourite epithet was that of the Roman Hercules, which is still to be seen upon his coins and medals. His whole conduct was equally odious and contemptible, and the public measures of his reign consist of nothing but the detection of some conspiracies which the hatred of his subjects and his own cruelty and inhumanity could not fail to excite. One conspiracy, at length, delivered the empire of its tyrant. His concubine Marcia, his chamberlain, and the commander of his guard, had ventured to remonstrate with him on the indecency of an emperor displaying himself as a combatant in the public games. This was an offence which could not be forgiven, and he accordingly determined their immediate destruction. Marcia found the list of his intended victims written in his own hand. She made haste to anticipate his purpose, and caused this worthless and inglorious wretch to be strangled, in the thirty-second year of his age and the thirteenth of his reign.

Lætus, captain of the prætorian guards, who had conducted the conspiracy which rid the world of Commodus, bestowed the empire on Publius Helvetius

Pertinax, a man of obscure extraction, but who, by his virtues and military talents, had raised himself to rank and esteem. The soldiers were promised a large donative, and the people, who respected the character of Pertinax, recognised him for their sovereign with the utmost demonstrations of joy. He applied himself immediately to the reformation of the abuses introduced by his predecessor; but his zeal for this reformation transported him beyond the bounds of prudence. The prætorian guards, debauched and effeminate in their morals and constitution, bore with great impatience the severity of that discipline to which they were now subjected, and regretted the happy licentiousness of the former reign. Lætus, the prefect, who expected that his services would entitle him to rule as a favourite minister, was disappointed by the austerity of the government of Pertinax. These discontents soon increased to such a degree as to become insurmountable; and the too virtuous Pertinax, after a reign of only eighty-six days, was openly murdered in the palace by the same hands which had placed him on the throne.

A transaction followed which was shameful beyond example: Sulpicianus, the father-in-law of Pertinax, demanded the empire from the prætorians, who replied to him that he should have his chance for it at a fair auction, as they had resolved to bestow it on the highest bidder. Didius Julianus, a wealthy senator, was at table when this intelligence was brought him. His wife, and the parasites who surrounded him, persuaded him he should embrace this opportunity of ascending a throne, which his virtues had long merited. He repaired instantly to the prætorian camp, and bidding at once a considerable sum beyond the offer of Sulpicianus, he was immediately proclaimed emperor. The obsequious senate made no scruple to confirm this election. He took his way to the palace, where, it is said, the first object which struck his eyes, was the headless trunk of Pertinax, and the frugal

entertainment which had been prepared for his supper. He viewed both with equal indifference, for he foresaw not what awaited him.

The people, not yet lost to every sense of their own importance, considered this measure as the last and severest insult on the Roman name. They gave free vent to their opinions; they openly execrated Didius as a usurper, and invited the legions in the provinces to assert the injured dignity of the empire. Among the generals who commanded these distant legions was Porsennius Niger. He was at that time in the government of Syria, when he received the request of the people to avenge the murder of Pertinax. The people of Asia solicited him to assume the purple himself, and he was easily prevailed upon. But at the same time that he was proclaimed in Asia, Decimus Clodius Albinus was proclaimed by the troops in Britain, and Septimus Severus in Illyria. Albinus, of known courage but of doubtful moral character, was sprung from one of the noblest families in Rome. Severus, an African by birth, owed his favour with the soldiers in a great measure to the high regard he had always professed for the character of Pertinax; but, above all to the promise of a donative superior to the price at which the wealthy Didius had purchased the empire. Saluted by his soldiers with the highest acclamations, and hailed by the title of Augustus, Severus marched directly to Rome. The prætorians, on the news of his approach, immediately abandoned Didius to his fate; and the senate, without ceremony, condemned him to be executed in the imperial palace. He reigned sixty-six days.

The almost incredible expedition of Severus, who conducted in a few days a numerous army from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tiber, proves at once, as Mr. Gibbon has remarked, the uncommon plenty produced at this time by the agriculture and commerce of the empire, the good state of the roads,

the discipline of the legions, and the indolent, subdued temper of the provinces.

Severus immediately ordered the corrupted and insolent troops of the prætorians to assemble unarmed on a large plain without the city. They obeyed, in terror for their fate. He caused them to be surrounded with the Illyrian legions, and then sharply reproaching them with the murder of Pertinax, and the disgraceful sale of the empire, (which he and his troops had, however, so accurately imitated,) he dismissed them with ignominy from their trust, and banished the whole of them, on pain of death, to the distance of one hundred miles from Rome. He then created a new guard, which he composed of soldiers of all different countries.

Matters, in the meantime, wore an unfavourable aspect in the extremities of the empire. Both the east and west were in arms against Severus. Finding himself unable at the same time to march against both, he endeavoured to secure the friendship of Albinus, by appointing him his successor in the empire, with the title of Cæsar; and having thus conciliated this powerful rival, he instantly marched against Niger in Asia. The armies soon met; and by the successful issue of three battles, in one of which Niger lost his life, he found himself without a rival, and master of the empire. His victories were succeeded by a conduct little short of that of a Marius or an Octavius. His proscription almost exterminated the army of Niger; and the miserable remnant which escaped were driven to seek shelter among the Parthians, to whom they taught the use of the Roman arms.

Severus was now no longer under the necessity of keeping terms with Albinus. He deprived him accordingly of the title of Cæsar, evincing clearly that it had been from necessity, not choice, he had ever bestowed it. Provoked at this usage, Albinus assumed a more illustrious denomination, caused himself to be proclaimed emperor, and marched for Italy.

Fortune still attended the arms of Severus; he defeated Albinus in a decisive battle near Lyons; and this general, anticipating the fate which awaited him, preferred dying by his own hand. The temper of Severus, naturally cruel, found many victims in those who had favoured the parties of his rival competitors. He examined the papers of Albinus, and thence found pretext for sacrificing forty of the senators. He seemed to take pleasure in degrading that order, and his intention seemed to be to extinguish every trace of the ancient republican administration, and erect the perfect fabric of an absolute monarchy. It became, therefore, his object to gain the affection of the soldiers, whom he attached to himself by every favour which he could bestow. Nor was his policy less conspicuous in the employment of men of talents, who in their writings and discourses instilled into the minds of the people the doctrines of passive obedience, and the duty of absolute submission to the will of their master. Dion Cassius, the historian, appears to have been commissioned to form these opinions into a system, and the Pandectæ of the Roman law afford evidence that the advocates and judges co-operated all to the same end.

Having thus secured his authority by every precaution which he esteemed necessary, he applied himself, with a policy certainly both able and praiseworthy, to promote the interests of the empire. His conduct in the administration of justice was exemplary. His laws were wise and judicious, and the fame of the Roman arms in no period since the republic had risen higher than in the reign of Severus. He delighted to affirm, and he had reason certainly to glory in it, that having received the empire oppressed with foreign and domestic wars, he left it in profound, universal, and honourable peace. To the military and political talents of Severus was added a taste for the fine arts, more especially for architecture. The most eminent of the civil lawyers flourished under his



reign—Ulpian, Paulus, and Papinian, who brought the system of Roman jurisprudence to its highest perfection.

Severus had two sons, Caracalla and Geta, who distinguished themselves in their infancy by a fixed and implacable hatred against each other. This unhappy and unnatural discord clouded the latter days of Severus. With a view of obviating the evil effects which the flattery of a court produced on their minds, the emperor seized the occasion of the war in Britain to carry them along with him, after associating them both with himself in the empire. Severus was at this time sixty years of age, and enfeebled with disease. The Caledonians under the command of Fingal invaded the Roman frontier, and defeated, on the banks of the river Carron, Caracalla, whom Ossian names *the son of the king of the world*. During the course of this war in Britain, it is shocking to relate that the abandoned Caracalla more than once attempted the life of his father, who, at length, broken by disease, died at York, in the 211th year of the Christian era. Caracalla and Geta agreed to divide the empire, the former retaining the western part, and the latter Asia and the eastern provinces. The mutual hatred of these two brothers was now fomented by their association in the government. Caracalla, at length worn out by the struggle, and unable to bear longer with his rival, caused him to be openly assassinated in the arms of his mother Julia, and had the address to persuade the people that he was compelled to this atrocious deed by motives of self-preservation. On this subject Ælius Spartianus has transmitted a fact, which strongly marks the degeneracy of the Roman character, and that abject servility with which the highest ranks of the state submitted to the yoke of tyranny.

Caracalla, after the death of his brother Geta, thought it necessary to apologize to the senate for a deed so dark and unnatural. He ordered a body of his guards to enter the senate-house, and two armed sol-

diers to post themselves at the side of every senator. Then gravely walking up to the consul's chair, he pronounced a studied harangue, setting forth the imperious necessity of the action, and urging that his concern for the interests of the state had, in this single instance, overcome his fraternal affection and the humanity of his nature. It may be believed that the Conscript Fathers were in no disposition to dispute the force of his arguments. Caracalla was now proclaimed sole emperor, and one of the first acts of his administration was to put to death the celebrated lawyer Papinian, who had refused to justify his conduct to the people. His reign, which was nothing but one continued scene of most complicated cruelties, was at last terminated by the assassination of the tyrant, in the sixth year of his government.

Those disorders in the empire which, as we have seen, began with the reign of Commodus, continued for about a century, till the accession of Diocletian. That interval was filled up by the reigns of Heliogabalus, Alexander Severus, Maximin, Gordian, Decius Gallus, Valerianus, Gallienus, Claudius Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, and Carus. The history of those reigns has been brilliantly given by Mr. Gibbon : and pleasure and profit must ever accompany the productions of that able, though sometimes dangerous, pen ; but our plan confines us necessarily to such general views as furnish useful lessons of the knowledge of mankind, and, excluding all minuteness of detail, looks only to those circumstances which may tend to illustrate the great doctrines of politics or of morality. In that catalogue of names which we enumerated, Valerian, a prince of considerable virtues, but enfeebled by age before he attained the empire, was the first of the Roman emperors who perished in captivity. In an unsuccessful expedition against Sapor, king of Persia, he was taken prisoner, treated, as is said, with every circumstance of indignity, and languished the remainder of his days in misery. During

the reign of his son Gallienus, there were actually nineteen pretenders to the sovereignty of different parts of the Roman empire. One of these, a native of Palmyra, Odenathus, by an effectual opposition to the progress of Sapor in Syria, was the preserver of that valuable province. Gallienus, sensible of his merits, conferred on him the title of Augustus; and Odenathus, like an independent sovereign, bequeathed at his death his crown to his widow Zenobia. Claudius, the successor of Gallienus, occupied in his wars against the German nations, allowed Zenobia to reign in peace over several of the Asiatic provinces, to which she added, by conquest, the kingdom of Egypt. For five years she maintained a splendid and politic dominion. But Aurelian, the successor of Claudius, after the reduction of the Germans and the recovery of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, out of the hands of Tetricus, a bold usurper, turned the arms of the empire against this heroic queen of the East. She defended her dominions with a manly spirit, and maintained a siege in her capital of Palmyra, which, for a while, baffled the utmost efforts of the Roman arms. The city, however, at length surrendered, and Zenobia, attempting to escape by flight upon the back of a dromedary, was taken and conveyed a prisoner to Aurelian. He brought the captive princess to Rome, where she, together with Tetricus, graced the triumph of Aurelian; the queen bound in fetters of gold. The emperor assigned her an elegant villa, near Rome, for her residence. The Syrian queen gradually sunk into a Roman matron; her daughters married into Roman families; and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century.

The succeeding reigns of Tacitus, Probus, and Carus, occupy a space of nine years, in the first seven of which—the reigns of Tacitus and Probus—the Roman empire was seen in a state both of splendour and of happiness. To Carus succeeded Diocletian, who began his reign in the 284th year of the Christian era,

and who soon evinced himself a prince of the greatest talents in every respect, but more especially as a politician. He may be considered, like Augustus, as the founder of a new empire. By birth a Dalmatian, and of mean extraction, he had yet raised himself, by his merit, to the supreme command in the army, and, having gained the empire, he determined to govern it by a new system of administration. He divided into four different governments the whole of the imperial dominions, and all the departments of authority civil and military. There were appointed to these four different governors with equal powers. Diocletian associated Maximian with himself as his colleague in the empire, with the title of Augustus; and bestowed on his two generals, Galerius and Constantius, the titles of Cæsars.

The four princes had each their distinct department: Galerius was stationed on the Danube to guard the Illyrian provinces; Constantius had the command of Gaul, Spain, and Britain; Maximian that of Italy and Africa; and Diocletian of Thrace, Egypt, and the Asiatic provinces. Each was supreme in his own district, and, what is truly singular, and evinces the talents of Diocletian, all lived in harmony, and in the most perfect good understanding with each other. This plan of dividing the empire was evidently a bad one in itself, nor could it possibly have been supported but by the superior and controlling genius of Diocletian. He allotted, in appearance, an equality of powers to his colleagues; but, in fact, the eminence of his own character and the superiority of his genius gave him always a decided superiority, and the other princes were little more than his viceroys or lieutenants. At times, he would make them understand this even with arrogance and harshness. Galerius had been defeated by the Persians, on which occasion Diocletian treated him with the utmost contempt, making him follow his chariot on foot; nor was he

restored to favour till he had by his successes regained his credit, and with this an equality of power.

Under the reign of this emperor, all vestiges of the ancient liberty of the Roman constitution were entirely annihilated. The sovereign assumed that ensign of royalty most odious to the Romans, the diadem, and introduced at home all the magnificent ceremonial of the Persian court. The name of the senate of Rome continued to be respected, but this body ceased to have the smallest weight or influence in affairs of state. By the vigour of Diocletian's administration, and the active abilities of his associates in power, the Roman arms regained for a while their ancient splendour, and general good order pervaded the empire. It was during this reign, also, that the northern barbarians, who for some time before had made themselves known by some partial irruptions, poured down in prodigious swarms upon the extremities of the empire. The Scythians, Goths, Sarmatians, Alani, and Quadi, began to make dreadful inroads, and for a while every successive defeat seemed only to increase their strength and perseverance.

At this period, Diocletian, along with his colleague, Maximian, surprised the world by resigning at once the royal dignity, and leaving the government in the hands of the two Cæsars, voluntarily returned to the condition of private citizens. Diocletian retired to Salona, the place of his nativity, now Spalatro, in Dalmatia, where he built a palace superior in extent and magnificence to any of his predecessors. In this seclusion from the cares of government he lived for several years, and was wont to say, that he counted the day of his retreat as the beginning of his life. Maximian, who had abdicated not from individual choice, but in consequence of a promise exacted on his admission to a share in the government, retired less willingly to Lucania. Constantius and Galerius now jointly governed the Roman empire, but soon after, Constantius died in Britain, and his son Constantine,



succeeding in the command of the troops, caused himself to be proclaimed emperor in the city of York. He immediately acquainted Galerius of this event, who was by no means heartily disposed to acknowledge his nomination. On Constantine he conferred, or rather continued to him, the title of Cæsar, while he associated with himself in the *empire* his favourite Severus. Meanwhile, Maximian was prevailed upon by his son Maxentius to abandon his retirement, and to resume the purple. They engaged, defeated, and put to death Severus; and Maximian, to unite his interest with Constantine against Galerius, gave him his daughter in marriage, by which alliance Constantine acquired a double title to the empire. Soon after this, Maximian, for what cause is not ascertained, died by his own hand, and Galerius was carried off by a mortal disease. Maxentius and Constantine, therefore, remained upon the stage to contend for the prize of undivided empire. It was at this time that Constantine, being converted to Christianity—(as is said, by a miraculous vision)—the true religion, after struggling with every opposition which ignorance, credulity, and persecution could have brought against it, ascended at last the imperial throne. Maxentius, on the other hand, from hatred to his rival, exerted himself in the most violent persecution of all who professed that religion. The Christians were at this time extremely numerous, both at Rome and in the provinces, and it became, therefore, an event of the greatest joy to them, that Maxentius in the first battle was defeated and slain, leaving Constantine undisputed master of the Roman empire.

The first step of his administration was to break up the prætorian bands, a measure equally politic for his own safety and agreeable to the people. He re-established the senate in its ancient deliberative rights; commenced the repair of Rome, and the other cities of Italy; and used his utmost endeavour by a firm, though a gentle and equitable administration, to pro-

mote the happiness and interest of his people. Aware of the danger of disgusting the public mind by any sudden or violent innovation upon those opinions which long custom had rendered sacred, he accepted the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, and in his first edicts, only granted to the Christians the public exercise of their religion; but his own example daily increased the number of proselytes, and he soon after began to establish churches for their worship. In these first years of his reign, the civil administration of Constantine was excellent. Every approach to oppression in the offices of the revenue met with an immediate check, and he abrogated that cruel institution which inflicted corporal punishment upon those who were debtors to the state. His maxim was, that equity ought ever to preponderate over strict law, and ought to determine all cases wherein law is doubtful. But amid these excellent features in the character of Constantine, it is painful to remark that a disposition to cruelty appeared, which sullied much of his glory. In an expedition against the Franks, a northern nation who had begun to make inroads on the Gauls, the prisoners taken in war were, with the most shocking inhumanity, exposed to the amphitheatre to be devoured by wild beasts.

One Licinius, a Dacian, had by Galerius been nominated Cæsar, and on the death of Galerius maintained possession of the Asiatic provinces. Constantine had not thought it expedient to dispute his right, while as yet his own was not thoroughly established, and had even virtually acknowledged it by giving him his sister in marriage. Licinius was a persecutor of the Christians, and this became soon a sufficient ground for Constantine to shake him off. He accordingly declared war against him as an enemy to God, and arming a fleet of two hundred galleys, and one hundred and thirty thousand men, he attacked him in Asia, and gained a complete victory. His rival was made prisoner and was promised his life, but this promise

was shamefully and dishonourably broken, and Licinus strangled in prison.

Constantine, now absolute and sole master of the empire, proceeded openly to signalize his zeal for Christianity. He ordered the temples to be shut, and prohibited sacrifices, but at the same time published an edict in the East, allowing universal toleration. This edict, however, which certainly seemed inconsistent with the general tenor of his principles, could not prevent the rising of a fanatical zeal for their peculiar tenets in the minds both of Christians and heathens, which soon produced the most violent and irreconcilable animosities. Constantine, returning from his Asiatic expedition, alienated the minds of his Roman subjects by two extraordinary acts of cruelty, the murder of his son Crispus and his step-mother Fausta, upon light suspicions of some infamous connexions having taken place between them. Many other individuals of rank were put to death on the evidence of informers, and on the most vague and general suspicions. The cruelty of the emperor became excessive. Rome cried out against him as a second Nero, and the populace openly insulted him.

Whether it was the disgust he conceived at this decided change in the minds of the Romans, or solely an ambitious and unsettled disposition which led to his design of altering the seat of empire, it is not easy to determine. He fixed his eyes, however, on Byzantium, to which he gave the name of Constantinople. He erected there the most superb structures, and in order to people his new city, he made a law by which no Asiatic should have the right of disposing of his estate by testament, unless he possessed a dwelling-house in Constantinople. Those, again, who resided there, were gratified by a variety of alluring privileges; and by means of these he drew the poorer inhabitants from Rome, while the richer voluntarily followed the prince and his court. The grandees brought with them their slaves, and Rome in a few years became

almost depopulated. Italy was also greatly exhausted of her inhabitants, and Constantinople swelled at once to the most overgrown dimensions. When the empire was thus divided, all riches naturally centred in the new capital. At this period, the German mines were unknown, those of Italy and Gaul were inconsiderable, as were also those of Spain. Italy was now a waste of desolated gardens. It had no pecuniary supplies from commerce, and being still subjected to the same taxes as when it was the seat of empire, its miserable situation may be easily conceived.

After thus weakening or rather annihilating the ancient capital of the empire, Constantine drew off from the frontiers the legions which were stationed on the banks of the large rivers, and distributed them into the provinces. This measure had two most pernicious effects. It left the frontiers to the mercy of the barbarous nations, and enervated the troops by the effeminate pleasures of the great cities. Luxury, which, in all its different shapes, pervaded even the extremities of the empire, reigned absolute in the centre. Constantine himself in everything affected the Asiatic splendour and ceremonial. He wore the diadem, and assumed a number of high-sounding, empty titles; his amusements were at once costly and effeminate; his festivals and public spectacles most profusely luxurious. Toward the conclusion of his reign, the Goths, making another invasion, were repulsed and defeated, but by imprudently raising many of them to offices of dignity, he gave to these barbarians a kind of footing in the Roman empire.

Sapor II., king of Persia, having made an inroad upon Mesopotamia, Constantine marched against him. He repulsed the Persian troops, but after the victory fell sick at Nicomedia, and there died at the age of sixty-three, and in the thirtieth year of his reign. His character cannot easily be drawn with impartiality. Talents and ability in no common degree he certainly possessed; but as to the other points of his character,

the professed pictures of historians are so extremely contradictory, that neither Pagan nor Christian writers deserve to be in any degree relied on. By the one class he is held forth as a shining example of universal virtue; by the other he is represented as a Proteus in every variety of vice. "We may," says the Abbé Fleury, "form an impartial judgment of the character of this emperor, by believing all the faults ascribed to him by the Bishop Eusebius, and all the good spoken of him by Zosimus."\*

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### CHAPTER III.

Change in the System of Policy and Government introduced by Constantine—Prætorian Præfects—Proconsuls—Counts and Dukes—Taxes—Free Gifts—Seat of Empire translated to Constantinople—Division of the Empire—Julian—His artful Hostility to Christianity—Jovian—Valentinian—Irruptions of the Goths—Of the Huns—Valens—Gratian—Theodosius—Valentinian the Second.

THERE were circumstances which rendered the reign of Constantine a remarkable epoch in the history of the Roman empire; and, as it is of consequence that we should become acquainted with that new system of policy and government which at this time was introduced, and which was so materially different from that constitution with which we have hitherto been acquainted, a few observations upon this subject may neither be impertinent nor uninteresting; more especially as they are connected with those internal causes which were now silently undermining the Roman power.

The distinctions of personal merit, so conspicuous under the republican form of government, were gradu-

\* Hist. Eccl., tome iii. p. 233.



ally weakening from the time that the imperial dignity arose, and now were almost totally obliterated. In their room was substituted a rigid subordination of rank and office, which went through all the departments of the state. Every rank was fixed, its dignity was displayed in a variety of trifling ceremonies; and, as Mr. Gibbon has remarked, in his favourite metaphoric style, "At this time the system of the Roman government might, by a philosophic observer, have been mistaken for a splendid theatre filled with players of every character and degree, who repeated the language and imitated the manners of the emperor, their original model."

The epithet *Illustrious*, which belonged only to the highest ranks of the state, was conferred upon four distinct classes of officers and magistrates: 1. The Consuls and Patricians; 2. The *Prætorian Præfects* of Rome and Constantinople; 3. The Masters General of the Cavalry and Infantry; and 4. The Seven Ministers of the Palace who exercised their sacred functions about the person of the emperor.

The ancient consuls were chosen by the suffrages of the people, and, during the government of the first emperors, by the real or apparent suffrage of the senate; but from the reign of Diocletian, they were created by the sole authority of the emperor. A magnificent festival was held at their inauguration; and their names and portraits, on tables of ivory, were dispersed to all the provinces and cities of the empire; but they had not a shadow of power—they no longer presided in the councils of the state, nor executed the resolutions of peace or war; and their names served for nothing more than to give the legal date of the year.

The ancient patrician families had been long since extinguished, and every dignity and distinction which arose from birth had been gradually obliterated, from the time that the offices of state had become common to the plebeians. The latter emperors preserved in-

deed the title of patricians, but it was now a personal and not an hereditary distinction. It was bestowed generally on their favourites as a title of honour, or upon ministers and magistrates who had grown old in office.

The authority of the prætorian præfects was very different from such nominal and inefficient dignities. From the time that the prætorian bands were suppressed by Constantine, these haughty officers, who had been little less than the masters of the empire, were now reduced to the station of useful and obedient ministers. They had lost all military command; but they became the civil magistrates of the provinces. The empire was divided under four governors. The præfect of the East had a jurisdiction from the Nile to the banks of the river Phasis in Colchis, and from the mountains of Thrace to the frontiers of Persia. The præfect of Illyrium, or Illyria, governed the provinces of Pannonia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece. The præfect of Italy superintended not only that country, but Rhætia, as far as the banks of the Danube, the Mediterranean islands, and the opposite coast of Africa. The præfect of the Gauls governed these provinces, and likewise Spain and Britain. These officers had the supreme administration of justice and of the finances. They watched over the conduct of the provincial magistrates, removed the negligent and inflicted punishments on the guilty. An appeal was competent to them from all the inferior jurisdictions, and Constantine disallowed any appeal from their sentences to himself.

The cities of Rome and Constantinople were exempted from the authority of the prætorian præfects. They had each their own præfect, who was the supreme magistrate of the city. They were presidents of the city, and all municipal authority was derived from them alone. They had the superintendence of the police, the care of the port, the aqueducts, the common sewers, the distribution of the public allow-

ance of corn and provision. A perfect equality was established between these dignities and the four prætorian præfects.

Such were the magistrates who formed the first class in the state, which was termed *Illustres*—Illustrious. Inferior to these, were those magistrates who were termed *Spectabiles*—Honourable. Such were the proconsuls of Asia, Achaia, and Africa, and the military Counts and Dukes (*Comites* and *Duces*) or generals of the Imperial armies.

The third class of the magistrates, inferior to the two former, had the denomination of *Clarissimi*—Most Noble. This class consisted of the governors of the provinces, who were intrusted, under the authority of the præfects or their deputies, with the administration of justice and the management of the finances in their respective districts.

The supreme jurisdiction exercised by the prætorian præfects over the armies of the empire was afterward transferred to eight Masters-General of the cavalry and infantry. Under their orders, thirty-five military commanders were stationed in the provinces. These were distinguished by the titles of Counts and Dukes, and they received each, besides their pay, an allowance sufficient to maintain one hundred and ninety servants, and one hundred and fifty-eight horses. They had no concern in the administration of justice or of the revenue; but they exercised a command over the troops independent of the authority of the magistrates. This necessarily created a divided interest, which relaxed the vigour of the state. The civil and the military magistrates could have no good understanding, and a source of dissension was thus established, which had the most pernicious consequences.

Of the seven Ministers of the Palace, who were likewise entitled to the rank of Illustrious, the first was the *Præpositus*, or Præfect of the Bedchamber, a eunuch whose duty was to perform all the menial ser-

vices about the emperor ; but whose office was at the same time esteemed so honourable as to rank before the proconsuls of Greece or Asia—a strong mark of the corruption of manners. The second of the ministers entitled to the same rank, was the Master of the Offices, who had the principal administration of public affairs—a sort of Secretary of State, having subordinate to him a great many other secretaries, who had each their different department. The third was the Quæstor. In some respects his office resembled that of a modern *chancellor*: he was the mouth of the emperor in pronouncing his edicts, and he prepared the form and style of the Imperial laws. The fourth was the Count of the *Sacred Largesses*, or the treasurer-general of the revenue, under whom were twenty-nine provincial receivers. His jurisdiction extended over the mines, over the mint, and even over the public treasuries. He likewise directed all the linen and woollen manufactures. Linen, it must be observed, though not anciently in use among the Romans, had become a common wear for the women even in the time of the elder Pliny. The fifth minister of the palace was the Count or Treasurer of the Private Estate, whose office was to administrate that revenue of the emperor which arose from his domain or territorial property, which he had in most of the provinces, and from the confiscations and forfeitures. The sixth and seventh were the two Counts of the Domestics, who commanded those bands of cavalry and infantry which guarded the emperor's person. The number of these troops amounted to three thousand and five hundred men.

The intercourse between the court and provinces was maintained by the construction of roads and by the institution of *Posts* ; but these establishments paved the way for a most intolerable abuse. Some hundred agents, who were afterward increased to some thousands, were employed, under the jurisdiction of the masters of the offices, to announce the

names of the annual consuls, and to report the edicts of the emperor through all the provinces. These people were, in fact, nothing else but the spies of government—who were encouraged, by rewards, to communicate from time to time all sorts of intelligence from the remote corners of the empire to its chief seat; to watch the progress of all treasonable designs, and discover such persons as they should find harbouring any symptom of disaffection; they were consequently the objects of terror and of consummate hatred: circumstances which prevented their employment from being ever accepted, unless by men of bad character and desperate fortune, who exercised without scruple the most unjust and insolent oppression.

Every institution was now calculated to support the fabric of despotism. The use of torture, from which, in the happier days of the Roman government, every one who enjoyed the privileges of a citizen was exempted, began now to be employed without regard to this distinction; in place of which a few special exemptions were granted by the emperor in favour of those of the rank of *illustres*, of bishops and professors of the liberal arts, soldiers, municipal officers, and children under the age of puberty; but these exceptions sanctified the use of torture in all other cases.

To these grievances may be added the oppressive taxes. The word *indiction*, which serves to ascertain the chronology of the middle ages, was derived from the practice of the emperor's signing with his own hand an edict prescribing the annual measure of the tribute to be levied, and the term allowed for payment of it. The measure or quantity was ascertained by a *census*, or survey, made by persons appointed for that purpose, through all the provinces, who measured the lands, took account of their nature, whether arable, pasture, wood, or vineyard, and made an estimate of their medium value, from an average produce of five years. The numbers of slaves and of cattle



were likewise reported, and the proprietors were examined on their oath as to the true state of their affairs. Part of the tribute specified by the indication was paid in money, and part in the produce of the lands; and so exorbitant were these taxes that the husbandmen found it their interest to let their fields lie uncultivated, as the burdens increased in a greater proportion to the produce than their profits. Hence the agriculture of the Roman provinces was almost ruined, and population, which keeps pace with plenty, gradually diminished.

But not only were the proprietors of land borne down by the weight of their taxes: the burden was equally severe on all classes of the citizens. Every branch of commercial industry paid its rated tribute. All the objects of merchandise, whether of home growth or of importation, all the products of arts and manufactures, were highly taxed; and as the tribute on land was made effectual by the seizure of personal property, that on personal property was enforced by corporal punishments. The cruel treatment of the insolvent debtors of the state, which, under some of the former emperors, had reached the height of barbarity, was however, mitigated by an edict of Constantine, in which he disclaims the use of racks and scourges for the punishment of debtors, and allots a spacious prison for their confinement.

To these supplies of the imperial revenue must be added those donations, called *Free Gifts*, from the several cities and provinces of the monarchy, which it was customary to bestow as often as the emperor announced his accession, his consulship, the birth of a son, the creation of a Cæsar, a victory over the barbarians, or any other event of great importance. These, which were now presents of money, came in place of the ancient offerings of crowns of gold made by the cities of Italy to a victorious general. The free gift of the senate of Rome, upon such occasions as we have mentioned, amounted to one thousand and six

hundred pounds weight of gold, (about two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars,) and the other cities of the empire, we may suppose, paid in proportion.

But none of the institutions of Constantine were so fatal to the empire as those which he introduced into the military discipline. A distinction was established between the troops which were stationed in the remote provinces, and those which remained in the heart of the empire; the latter were termed *Palatines*, by way of superiority, and enjoyed a much higher pay, which enabled them, except in time of war, to indulge themselves in idleness, indolence, and every species of luxury. The former, termed *the Borderers*—who, in fact, had the care of the empire, and were exposed to perpetual dangers—had a very small allowance of pay, with the mortification of feeling themselves held of inferior consideration, and thus were, in fact, nothing else than the slaves of a despot. Constantine likewise, from the timid policy of securing against mutinies and insurrections among the troops—which were extremely formidable while the legion contained its ancient number of five thousand, six thousand, or even eight thousand or nine thousand men—reduced the number of men in the legion to one thousand or to one thousand and five hundred; so that each of these weakened bodies, awed by the sense of its own imbecility, could now attempt no conspiracy that was formidable. The whole body of the army was likewise debased by the intermixture of the barbarian nations, the Scythians, Goths, and Germans, who henceforth bore a very great proportion in each of the legions.

Such was the state of the Roman empire at the time of the translation of its seat from Rome to Constantinople. An authority, vigorously despotic, preserved, as yet, the union of this immense mass, which was labouring internally with the seeds of corruption and dissolution. In the capitol of the empire, the Roman name owed its chief lustre now to pomp and mag-

nificence—a poor substitute for that real dignity, derived, in former times, from its heroic and patriotic virtues.

Constantine, with a very destructive policy, had divided the empire among no less than five princes; three of them his sons, and two nephews. Constantius, the youngest and most ambitious of the sons, soon got rid of the nephews. They were massacred by the soldiers, along with many others of his relations, and several of the principal courtiers. The brothers quarrelled among themselves; the two elder, Constans and Constantinus, took up arms, and the latter falling in battle, Constans became sole master of the Western empire. This, however, he did not long enjoy, being soon after assassinated by Magnentius, a German.

Constantius was now possessed of undivided legal authority, but had a formidable rival in Magnentius, whose party was much increased, for while the emperor indolently occupied himself in theological controversies, his best troops had sided with the usurper. Constantius made a dastardly offer of peace, which Magnentius rejected, and an engagement followed which decided the fate of the empire. Constantius was successful, though he had not dared to take the field in person, but waited the event of the battle in a neighbouring church. Magnentius took refuge in Gaul, where, being surrounded by the imperial legions, he, in a transport of despair, murdered his mother and several of his relations, and then stabbed himself with his own hand.

Two nephews of Constantine had escaped that massacre of his kindred by which Constantius had secured to himself an undivided empire: these were Gallus and Julian. The former, Constantius honoured with the dignity of Cæsar, and appointed the city of Antioch for his residence, where for a short time he ruled the eastern provinces with a violent and tyrannical authority. Constantius, governed at that time by the

eunuch Eusebius, was persuaded that Gallus, by his enormities, had rendered himself unworthy of the dignity to which he had raised him. He sent an order for Gallus to repair to the imperial court, then at Milan, which that prince did not dare to disobey. He was instantly deprived of his guards, hurried to prison, and beheaded like the meanest malefactor.

A variety of civil broils, mutinies of the troops against their generals, had weakened the force of the armies, and left the western frontier to the mercy of the barbarians. The Franks, Saxons, and Alemanni ravaged the Gauls, and destroyed forty-five cities on the banks of the Rhine. Pannonia and Mœsia were laid waste by the Sarmatians, while the Persians made dreadful incursions upon the eastern empire. Constantius was wholly occupied with his religious controversies; but was fortunately prevailed on by his emperess to take one measure most conducive to the general safety, which was to confer on his cousin Julian the title and dignity of Cæsar.

This prince, had he appeared in any other era than that in which two opposite religions were contending for pre-eminence, would have shone as a very illustrious character. He possessed many heroic qualities, and his mind was formed by nature to promote the greatness and the happiness of an empire. He had completed his studies at Constantinople and at Athens. In the latter city, the conversation of the Platonic philosophers had given him a strong distaste for the doctrines of Christianity, in which he had been educated; and what, unfortunately, riveted his aversion, was the example of his cousin, Constantius.

Constantius named Julian *Cæsar* at the age of twenty-three, and appointed him governor of Gaul; but with few troops, little money, and a very limited command; accountable to a set of veteran officers, whom the emperor appointed for his counsellors. Under all these disadvantages he soon showed distinguished abilities.

In the first year of his government he studied the art of war at Vienna, applied himself with ardour to the discipline of his troops, and partook himself, with his soldiers, of every fatigue to which the meanest were subjected. Two important objects were thus obtained—a well-regulated army, and a devoted affection of the troops to the person of their commander. With these advantages he soon signalized his military talents. He drove the barbarians out of Gaul, and carried the terror of his arms beyond the limits of the frontier. Constantius, in his conclave of bishops, arrogated to himself the honour of these victories, and was employed in holding ecclesiastical councils, while Sapor, the Persian, with a formidable army, broke in upon Mesopotamia. Julian was now become an object of jealousy to him: with a view of disarming him, he ordered him to send the best of his troops to Constantinople, to serve against the Persians; by which means so inconsiderable a handful would remain with their commander, that the barbarians, with ease and impunity, could have regained what they had lost.

Julian prepared to obey, but the army took an opposite measure; they proclaimed him emperor, and forced him, apparently unwilling, to accept the purple.\* He still preserved the show of allegiance, and wrote to Constantius, informing him of the proceedings of the army, and of the impossibility of removing them from the province without their commander. Constantius, with amazing folly, only repeated his orders in a more peremptory style; and Julian, congratulating himself that every scruple of honour was satisfied, openly shook off his submission, and took the field to maintain his right to the empire. He marched with rapidity into Greece. Italy was his own, and everything submitted to his arms. Constantius escaped the ignominy that awaited him, by dying at this juncture of a fever in Cilicia.

\* The circumstances attending this event are extremely well painted by Mr. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 22.



Julian was now acknowledged through the whole empire. He began his reign by the reformation of a variety of civil abuses in the different departments of the state, abolishing superfluous offices, and striking at the root of luxury by sumptuary laws. He now gave a loose to his hatred against Christianity, but attacked that religion by a policy far more pernicious than open persecution. He began by reforming the Pagan theology; and artfully attending to the great difference between that and the Christian religion, which, to the purest doctrines of faith, joined the most excellent system of morality, he endeavoured to give Paganism that morality which it wanted, thence confessing the excellence of Christianity by adopting its sublimest precepts. He drew up himself a plan of conduct for the priests, recommending to them a purity of life and uncorrupted integrity; thus to enforce by their example the doctrines which they sought to inculcate.\* Certain modern writers, unfriendly to our

\* The 49th, 62d, and 63d Epistles of Julian, and a separate fragment on the same subject, give a very strong picture of his zeal for pagan reformation. "The exercise of the sacred functions," says Julian, "requires an immaculate purity both of mind and body; and even when the priest is dismissed from the temple to the occupations of common life, it is incumbent on him to excel in decency and virtue the best of his fellow-citizens. He should never be seen in theatres or taverns. His conversation should be chaste, his diet temperate, his friends of honourable reputation. His studies should be suited to the sanctity of his profession. Licentious tales or comedies, or satires, must be banished from his library, which ought solely to consist of historical and philosophical writings; of history which is founded in truth, and of philosophy which is connected with religion. The impious opinions of the Epicureans and Sceptics deserve his abhorrence and contempt; but he should diligently study the systems of Pythagoras, of Plato, and of the Stoics, which unanimously teach *that there are gods; that the world is governed by their providence; that their goodness is the source of every temporal blessing; and that they have prepared for the human soul a future state of reward or punishment.*"

religion, have enlarged, with much apparent satisfaction, on the great clemency and moderation which Julian showed in his treatment of the Christians—affecting not to perceive that this seeming clemency and moderation was the most artful and most dangerous policy that could have been employed against them; for let us observe how Julian conducted himself. He forbade the persecution of the Christians, whom he represented as deluded men, the objects of compassion, not of punishment; but declared, at the same time, that their *phrensy* incapacitated them from all employments, civil or military. Their law, he said, prohibited all quarrels and dissensions; it was not, therefore, necessary that *they* should have the benefit of courts of justice to decide their differences. He prohibited them from teaching or learning grammar, rhetoric, or philosophy. These, he said, were pagan sciences, treated of by authors whose principles the Christians were taught to abhor, and whose books contained tenets which must shock the pure morality of their religion. It is easy to perceive that this artful and insidious mode of attack was, in reality, much more destructive than the most sanguinary persecution.

This conduct of Julian would seem to argue a disposition at least entirely free from any tincture of superstition, and careless of all religion; but, in fact, Julian was, as a pagan, blinded by the most bigoted superstition. His belief in omens was ridiculous; his sacrifices were so numerous, that cattle were wanting to supply him with victims.\* The expense

\* Ammianus, though a pagan himself, and an admirer of the character of Julian, justly censures this part of his conduct:—"Hostiarum tamen sanguine plurimo aras crebritate nimia perfundebat, tauros aliquoties immolando centenos, et innumeros varii pecoris greges, avesque candidas terra quæsitæ et mari."—"He too profusely poured upon the altars the blood of victims, at times by sacrificing a hundred oxen, innumerable flocks of various kinds of sheep, and white birds collected from all parts of the land and sea." And he describes the soldiers rioting upon the flesh of the sacrifices, and daily

of these religious rites became burdensome to the state, and was universally complained of.\* He was even accused of the horrid abomination of human sacrifices. His enthusiasm and fanaticism, acknowledged even by his greatest panegyrists, "almost degrade him to the level of an Egyptian monk."—"Notwithstanding his own modest silence upon the subject," says Mr. Gibbon, "we may learn from his faithful friend, the orator Libanius, that he lived in a perpetual intercourse with the gods and goddesses; that they descended upon earth to enjoy the conversation of their favourite hero; that they gently interrupted his slumbers by touching his hand or his hair; that they warned him of any impending danger, and conducted him by their infallible wisdom in every action of his life; and that he had acquired such an intimate knowledge of his heavenly guests, as readily to distinguish the voice of Jupiter from that of Minerva, and the form of Apollo from the figure of Hercules." In short, this wise and philosophic emperor was, in matters of religion, one of the weakest, most bigoted, and superstitious of mankind.

Fortunately for Christianity, he died at a very early age. He intended to revenge the injuries which the empire had sustained from Sapor, and prepared to carry war into the heart of Asia. After a dangerous march through Assyria, and the siege and reduction of some of the principal towns, he advanced to the banks of the Tigris. Here, in an engagement with the Persians, Julian was slain at the age of thirty-one.

gorging themselves with those dainties and with strong liquors, so that they were frequently carried to their quarters on the shoulders of the passengers. The enjoyment of such freedoms would very soon convert the army to the religion of their sovereign.—*Vid. Ammian. l. xxii. c. 12.*

\* Ammianus compares him in this respect to Marcus Cæsar, to whom the cattle were feigned to have made this ludicrous complaint: "The white oxen to Marcus Cæsar; If you conquer, we are undone."

It is generally acknowledged that he had uncommon talents, and many of the virtues of a great prince; had not these virtues and great talents been disgraced by his inveterate hatred to Christianity, from the doctrines of which religion he had early apostatized.\* Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem is well known. The supernatural check said to have been given to that attempt by an eruption of flames from the earth has occasioned much learned theological controversy. I shall not enter into the question; but must remark that the story is related by Julian's own friendly historian, Ammianus,† a sincere pagan, whose evidence in this matter is therefore less suspicious.

\* Prudentius gives the following very just and impartial character of Julian:—

“—— Ductor fortissimus armis,  
 Conditor et legum celeberrimus; ore manumque  
 Consultor patriæ; sed non consultor habendæ  
 Religionis, amans tercentum millia Divum:  
 Perfidus ille Deo: sed non et perfidus orbi.”

*Prudent. Apoth. 450, &c*

“A most valiant general, a renowned legislator; in word and deed the friend of his country; but not the friend of the religion she was to possess, preferring rather three hundred thousand divinities; disloyal indeed to God, but not disloyal to the empire.”

† Dr. Howel, in his valuable History of the World, has given the life of Julian almost in the words of Ammianus Marcellinus, who was an officer in Julian's army, and a witness of all his exploits; an impartial biographer, for he blames as well as praises. The abilities of Julian are sufficiently proved by his own literary compositions. In his Satire, termed the *Mispogon*, or Beard-hater, he paints his own character with freedom and with wit; and we learn more from it of the real dispositions of this singular man, than from the narratives of his historians. (The *Misopogon* is well abridged by Dr. Howel, vol. ii. c. i. 5.) His moral fable, entitled *The Cæsars*, is one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit. For an abstract of it, see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. 24.

The death of Julian struck despair into the hearts of the Roman army. A leader, however, was immediately required, and the choice fell upon Jovian, a captain in the domestic guards. Though luxurious and even dissolute in his manners, he possessed many excellent qualities. A negotiation with Sapor was in the present conjuncture absolutely necessary. But the Persian, confident of his advantages, insisted on terms dishonourable to the Romans. He demanded five provinces to be restored, which had been ceded by his grandfather to Galerius; and required, besides, several towns in Mesopotamia. It was absolutely necessary to grant these conditions, though the empire agreed to them with general dissatisfaction.

Jovian, having thus secured a peace, applied himself with zeal to the happiness of his subjects. He favoured Christianity, and sought to heal the wounds which that religion had received from his predecessor. He showed, in the means which he adopted for promoting it, a policy equally artful with that of Julian for its destruction. In a council which he assembled at Antioch, he declared his resolution that no man should be molested on account of his religious tenets. He recalled the banished Christians, admitting them with the pagans, equally, to the exercise of all public employments: these commencements promised a happy reign; but the hopes of the empire were blasted as soon as they were formed, for Jovian died at the age of thirty-three, after a reign only of seven months.\*

The army then in Bithynia chose Valentinian for their emperor—a man of obscure birth, but of considerable military reputation. He was illiterate, severe in his manners, and excessively avaricious; yet in other respects deserving of the throne. As soon as he was elected, he was urged to name a colleague. “You

\* The accounts of his death are various. Ammianus says, “He was suffocated in his sleep, either by the vapour of a newly-plastered room or the smoke of coals; or that he died of a surfeit.”—*Ammian.* xxv. 10.



have elected me," said he, "your emperor; it is now my province to command, and it is yours to obey. I shall choose for myself a colleague, whom I think proper, and when I judge expedient." He afterward named his brother Valens, to whom he gave the dominion of the East, reserving to himself the West. Valens had to oppose Sapor, who now attempted the conquest of Armenia; and Valentinian the barbarians, who poured down upon the western empire from every quarter. Previous, however, to any warlike expedition, Valentinian thought it necessary to establish a good political arrangement at home. The clergy had formerly been exempted from taxes, but Valentinian thought that, as the interest of the state was the concern of all its members, no order should be privileged. Though a Christian himself, his zeal was subservient to policy. He interfered in no theological disputes, leaving these to be determined by the clergy; and so far was he from persecuting the pagans, that he allowed them an unlimited toleration. These prudent measures prevented all religious disturbances; and the Christian religion silently made greater progress than if it had been intemperately promoted by the ardour of a zealot.

Valentinian now marched into Gaul, and repelled the Alemanni and other barbarous tribes, in a series of successful engagements. In these, however, the severity of his disposition was rigorously felt, and the Roman name was disgraced by many atrocious actions.

Valentinian gave peace to the Western empire; but the East was distracted by the imprudent zeal of Valens, who, intemperately promoting the cause of Arianism, invited a swarm of enemies upon the empire who, in the end, entirely subverted it. These were the Goths, a people originally inhabiting the country of Scandinavia, which the ancient authors have termed the nursery of the human race; *officina humani generis*. Montesquieu accounts for those prodigious inundations from the North, which argue an astonishing

populousness of those countries which sent them out, by saying, "that the violence of the Romans had forced the people of the South to retire to the North," and that they now regorged upon the empire;\* but we know of no violences equal to the production of that effect, and the barbarians who invaded the empire retained no traces of a southern origin, but showed, in their manners, customs, and laws, a genius and character entirely their own and strongly distinct from that of the nations of the South. Some centuries before the Christian era, the Goths had emigrated from the North; and some of their tribes, the Vandals, Heruli, and Lombards, had established themselves in Germany. In the second century, a vast body had fixed their residence on the banks of the Palus Mæotis; and had thence extended their conquests with great rapidity. Under the reign of Valens, they took possession of the province of Dacia, and were distinguished by the appellation of Ostrogoths and Visigoths, or Eastern and Western Goths—the first inhabiting the coasts of the Euxine Sea, and toward the mouth of the Danube; the latter dwelling along the banks of that river. They were a remarkable people; and their manners, laws, government, and customs are highly deserving of particular attention, as the great fountain from which the manners and policy of all the European nations are at this day derived. It will not, therefore, be impertinent to bestow some time in giving a particular view of this people, which I shall do when I have brought the Roman history to its period.

Julian had despised these invaders, and the terror of his name had kept them quiet during his reign. Procopius, the cousin of Julian, had attempted to wrest the throne from Valens, and obtained for that purpose the assistance of the Goths; but that emperor engaged them with success and compelled them to repass the Danube. Valentinian, in the meantime, engaged with

\* Mont., *Grand. et Décad.*, chap. xvi.

the Alemanni in Germany, died upon that expedition, and was succeeded by Gratian, his eldest son, who was then in the sixteenth year of his age. He had borne the title of Augustus from his ninth year, and his right to the empire was not disputed. The army joined with him his brother, Valentinian II., an infant four years old. The youth and inexperience of Gratian led him in the beginning of his reign to authorize some tyrannical and cruel acts, which appeared contrary to his natural disposition. Valens, in the meantime, in the East filled the empire with daily examples of vice and tyranny. He was detested by his subjects, and consequently exposed to frequent conspiracies, which, in their punishment, gave fresh display to his sanguinary disposition.

While the Eastern empire thus groaned under a vicious prince, a new race of barbarians came down from the North in a resistless torrent, which affected almost every quarter of Europe. These were the Huns, a race of Tartars or Siberians—unknown till then by the European nations; though they had long before that period been the terror of the Chinese, who are supposed to have built their famous wall to defend themselves from their invasions.

The occasion of this irruption into Europe appears to have been a civil war among themselves, in which the vanquished party were driven to the South. The Goths, a comparatively civilized people, looked upon the Huns as monsters; they fled before them. The Visigoths, who were first attacked, entreated the Romans to receive them into their dominions. Valens, who was no politician, was flattered by their request, and immediately granted them a settlement in Thrace. The Ostrogoths next appeared, and demanded the same protection. Valens now began to fear the consequences of harbouring such a multitude of strangers, and he refused their demand; but the frontiers of the empire being ill defended, the Ostrogoths, disregarding his refusal, passed forward without opposition, and

overpowered Thrace like a deluge. Valens hastily concluded a peace with Sapor, the Persian, to march to the defence of that province; but he had discharged the greatest part of the old troops, trusting that these very invaders would be the defence of the empire: his army was raw and undisciplined. Fritigern, king of the Goths, cut them to pieces in the battle of Adrianople, and Valens himself perished in the engagement. These northern strangers were now unresisted. They ravaged Achaia and Pannonia; the considerable towns alone holding out against them, and these only because they knew not the art of besieging.

Gratian, in this critical juncture, arriving at Constantinople, assumed Theodosius, an able general, for his colleague in the empire, who was, in every sense, worthy of his dignity. To great courage and magnanimity, Theodosius joined an honourable and virtuous disposition; though, as a Christian emperor, his character has, of course, been aspersed by Pagan historians. He enacted many excellent laws. His religious zeal perhaps transported him too far; certainly some of the laws which he framed against heretics are rigorous in the extreme. Gratian, his colleague, was equally zealous, and yet more imprudent. He provoked the Pagans by persecution and the destruction of their temples, so that he became, from that cause alone, an object of hatred to the greatest part of his subjects.

Upon the death of Gratian, his infant son, Valentinian II., succeeded to the Western empire, which was, in the meantime, governed by Theodosius as his guardian. This prince, who obtained and who deserved the epithet of *great*, ruled the empire for eighteen years with consummate ability. He was at first obliged to yield the government of Britain and the Gauls to the prefect of Maximus, who had obtained the absolute command of the troops in those provinces, and, confident of his powers, had demanded a share of the empire. This concession emboldened Maximus to aim

at the sovereignty of the whole. He invaded Italy, and took possession of Rome, while the young Valentinian, with his mother Justina, fled for refuge to Thessalonica. But Theodosius marching against the usurper, defeated him in a decisive engagement in Pannonia, and allowed him to be massacred by the victorious troops. Valentinian was thus restored to the sovereignty of the West by the arms of his guardian. But the young prince soon after fell a sacrifice to the treason of one of his generals, Arbogastes; and Theodosius, defeating Arbogastes, remained sole emperor of the East and West.

The character of this prince was worthy of the best ages of the Roman state. The wisdom of the laws of Theodosius procured him the esteem and affection of his subjects; the success of his arms kept in terror the surrounding barbarians. His domestic character was amiable and respectable, though sullied at times by an intemperance of passion which led him into some acts of inhumanity, for which, in his cool moments, he suffered the keenest remorse. Under a series of princes like Theodosius, the Roman empire might have once more regained its ancient dignity and splendour; but the weakness of his successors blasted all those pleasing expectations.

The reign of Theodosius was the era of the downfall of the Pagan religion in the Roman empire, and the full *establishment of Christianity*. As this great revolution in human affairs is of the utmost importance, in far more than a mere political point of view, we shall consider it at some length in the succeeding chapter.



## CHAPTER IV.

## Establishment of Christianity in the Empire.

A THOROUGH acquaintance with the history of the world and the state of mankind at the time of our Saviour's birth has led the wisest and most enlightened inquirers to conclude, that the Almighty having designed to illuminate the world by a revelation, there was no period at which it was more certainly required than that in which it was actually sent; nor could any concurrence of circumstances have been more favourable for its extensive dissemination, than that which took place at the time of our Saviour's mission. A great part of the known world was at this time under the dominion of the Romans, and subject to all those grievances which are the inevitable result of a system of arbitrary power. Yet this circumstance of the union of so many nations into one great Empire was of considerable advantage for the propagation and advancement of Christianity: for that spirit of civilization which nations, hitherto sunk in barbarism, derived from an intercourse with a refined and liberal people, was favourable to the diffusion of a religion which was founded in an extension of the social feelings; that is to say, in universal charity and benevolence. These nations were, previous to this, sunk in the grossest superstition. The pagan religion had no influence toward refining or improving the morals of mankind. The only attributes which distinguished the heathen gods from the race of ordinary men were their power and their immortality. They were endowed with the same passions as human creatures, and those distinguishing attributes of power and immortality served, in general, only to extend the measure and the enormity of their vices. The example of their gods was, therefore, an incentive to *vice* instead of *virtue*; and those rites with which many of

them were worshipped, and which were conceived to be peculiarly acceptable to them, were often the grossest violations not only of *decency* but of *humanity*.

The *philosophy* too of the pagan world was but ill calculated to supply the place of religion in the refinement of morals. The doctrines of Epicurus, which were highly prevalent at the time of the birth of Christ, by representing pleasure as the chief good, by imposing no restraint on the indulgence of the passions, and limiting all happiness to the enjoyments of the present life, tended to corrupt and degrade human nature to a rank little superior to that of the brutes. Next to the Epicurean system, the doctrines most prevalent at that time were those of the new Academy, very different from those of the old Academy founded by Plato. The new *Academies* asserted the impossibility of arriving at truth, and held it entirely a matter of doubt whether vice or virtue were preferable. These opinions evidently struck at the foundation not only of religion, but of morality: and as to the other sects, although the *Platonists*, the *Stoics*, and the disciples of *Aristotle*, made the belief of a God a part of their philosophy, and some of them—as, for example, the *Stoics*—entertained sublime ideas with regard to the nature of virtue and the dignity of man, yet the austerity of their doctrines, and indeed the incomprehensibility of many of their tenets, gave them but few followers in comparison with the popular sects of the *Epicureans* and new *Academics*.\*

\* But not only was this the situation of the pagan world, even the Jews themselves at this period were a most corrupted and degenerate people. That law which they had received from God they had vitiated by the intermixture of heathen doctrines, and ceremonies borrowed from the pagans; while their doctors dissented from the opinions of each other in the most essential articles, such as the literal or figurative interpretation of the Scripture, the temporal or the spiritual authority of the promised Messiah, the materiality or spirituality of the soul; in short, Judaism itself was so much corrupted or

At no period, therefore, of the history of the world did mankind stand more in need of a superior light to dispel the mists of error, and to point out the path of true religion and of virtue, than at that great era when the *Messiah* appeared upon earth. The propagation of a new religion, which thus strongly opposed itself not only to the prevailing passions and habits of mankind, but to established and revered systems of philosophy, could not fail to encounter a violent and obstinate opposition. Let us take a short progressive view of the state of the church in the four first centuries from its institution.

The severe persecutions which the first Christians underwent from the Romans, who had then acquired the sovereignty of the greatest part of the known world, have been reckoned a singular exception to that spirit of toleration which this enlightened people showed for the various systems of idolatrous worship different from their own which they found prevailing in the countries which they conquered; but this may be very easily accounted for: the Romans showed a spirit of toleration to the religious opinions of other nations, because they found nothing in these which aimed at the subversion of their own religion, nor anything of that zeal of making converts which so remarkably distinguished the votaries of Christianity. The religion of the Romans was inseparably interwoven with their system of government. The Christians, by exposing the absurdities of their system of worship, in effect undermined the fabric of their political constitution; and hence they were not without reason considered by the Romans as a dangerous body of men, whom it became the interest of the empire to suppress and exterminate. Hence those opprobrious epithets with which they have been stigmatized by the Roman

disguised, that it had become a source of national discord and division among its own votaries, as well as the object of abhorrence and contempt to the pagan world.

writers, and hence those cruel persecutions which they underwent from the emperors and their deputies in the provinces.

In the first century after the death of Christ, the emperors Nero and Domitian exercised against the Christians all that sanguinary cruelty which pre-eminently distinguished their characters; and the number of martyrs whose names are recorded to have suffered in those persecutions, though suspected to be exaggerated much beyond the truth, was yet extremely great. These were, no doubt, chiefly men of some eminence, whose consideration and authority with the lower ranks of people, made them to be regarded as peculiarly dangerous, or whose wealth offered a tempting object to the avarice of the Roman governors.

But, under all these discouragements, Christianity made a most rapid and wonderful progress, through the power and efficacy of its first teachers, those holy men to whom the *Messiah* himself had given in charge the enunciation of his religion to mankind.

There is no subject which has afforded greater controversy than the ascertainment of that external form which our Saviour is supposed to have given to the primitive church, or that method which was instituted for its government. While the supporters of the Roman Catholic Faith maintain, that it was our Saviour's intention that the whole Christian church should form one body, which was to be governed by St. Peter and his successors—the doctors of the church of England deny the evidence of any divine institution of a supreme perpetual head: but refer to the *Apostles* the nomination of *Bishops*, or *Ministers*, presiding over a certain district, whom the civil authority, and regulations of good policy, afterward subjected to a *Metropolitan*, a *Patriarch*, or an *Archbishop*. The Presbyterians again affirm, that it was the intention of the great Author of Christianity that all ministers and teachers of the Gospel should be upon a level of perfect equality. To these three opinions a fourth

may be added, and this is, that neither Christ nor his Apostles have laid down *any certain or precise system of church government*; but, confining their precepts to the pure doctrines of religion, have left all Christian associations to regulate the government of their churches in that manner which is best adapted to the spirit of their political constitutions, and to the varying state of mankind in different ages or periods of society.

About the middle of the second century, we find that the Books of the New Testament had been collected into one volume, and were received as a canon of faith in all the Christian Churches. This selection of the inspired books from the compositions of many ministers or teachers of Christianity, who had written in imitation of their style and had recorded the acts of our Saviour and his Apostles, is supposed to have been made by some of the early Fathers of the church. The four Gospels, it is generally believed, had been collected during the lifetime of St. John. The Books of the Old Testament had been translated from the Hebrew into Greek by the orders of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the year 285 before Christ.\*

\* The most ancient account we have of this Septuagint translation of the Bible is from Aristeas, an officer in the guards of Ptolemy Philadelphus, at the time when it was completed. He informs us that Ptolemy, being desirous of forming a very great library at Alexandria, employed Demetrius Phalereus, a noble Athenian, to procure from different nations all books of any reputation that were among them. Demetrius informed him that the Jews were possessed of a most extraordinary volume, containing the ancient history of that people, and the ordinances of their lawgiver Moses, which he represented as a singular curiosity. Ptolemy immediately sent to Jerusalem to procure this volume, and, being desirous of understanding its contents, he requested of Eleazer the High Priest to send him six elders of each of the tribes, men of fidelity and ability, to translate it into the Greek language; in consideration of which favour, he agreed to set at liberty all the Jewish captives, to the amount of a hundred and twenty thousand, whom his father Ptolemy Soter had reduced to



As the Christian religion was received, at first, by many from the conviction of its truth from external evidence, and without a due examination of its doctrines, it was not surprising that many who called themselves Christians should retain the doctrines of a prevailing philosophy to which they had been accustomed, and endeavour to accommodate these to the system of revelation which they found in the sacred volumes. Such, for example, were the Christian Gnostics, who intermixed the doctrines of the oriental philosophy concerning the two separate principles, a good and an evil, with the precepts of Christianity, and admitted the authority of Zoroaster, as an inspired personage, equally with that of Jesus Christ. Such, likewise, were the sect of the Ammonians, who

slavery. The request was granted; a magnificent copy of the Old Testament, written in letters of gold, and *seventy-two* learned men, were sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria, where they were received with the utmost respect, and lodged in a palace prepared for their reception.

In modern times, Dupin, Prideaux, and others, have endeavoured to discredit many of the circumstances enumerated by Aristæus; but all agree in the main fact, that a translation of the books of the Old Testament was made into Greek under Ptolemy Philadelphus, and lodged in the Alexandrine library.

For four hundred years this translation was in high estimation with the Jews; it was read in their synagogues in preference to the Hebrew, and that even in Jerusalem and Judea. But when they saw that it was equally valued by the Christians, they became jealous of it, and employed Aquila, a heathen proselyte to the Jewish religion, to make a new translation, which he completed about A. D. 128. In this work, Aquila took care to give such a turn to all the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah, that they should not apply to Jesus Christ: and other translations on the same insidious principle were made by Symmachus and Theodotion.

Those who desire more particular accounts of the Septuagint translation may consult Prideaux' *Connexions*, part 2. b. i.; Hody de *Biblicorum Textibus*; Owen's *Inquiry into the Septuagint versions*; Blair's *Lectures on the Canon*; and Michaelis's *Introduction to the New Testament*.

vainly endeavoured to reconcile together the opinions of all the different schools of the pagan philosophy, and attempted, with yet greater absurdity, to accommodate all these to the doctrines of Christianity. From this confusion of the pagan philosophy with the plain and simple doctrines of the Christian religion, the church, in this period of its infant state, suffered in a most essential manner. The Christian doctors began now to introduce that subtle and obscure erudition which tends to perplex and bewilder, instead of enlightening the understanding. The effect of this in involving religion in all the perplexity of the scholastic philosophy, and thus removing its doctrines beyond the comprehension of the mass of mankind, was, with great justice, condemned by many of the wisest fathers of the church; and hence sprung those inveterate and endless controversies between faith and reason, religion and philosophy, which began at that early period, and have, unfortunately, continued to the present day.

About the middle of the second century, the Greek churches began to unite into general associations; the whole churches of a province forming one body, and agreeing to be governed by general rules of discipline, which were concerted and framed by a council of the elders, or deputies from each particular church. These assemblies the Greeks termed Synods, and the Latin churches, following the same example, termed these general meetings Concilia; and the rules of discipline there enacted were called Canons. As it was necessary for the maintenance of order in these assemblies that some person of authority should preside, the right of presiding was conferred, by an election of the several bishops, either upon some one of themselves possessing eminent virtue or abilities, or, not improbably, on the person who had the most extensive church or diocese; and hence arose the right of the Metropolitans. A short time after, we find a superior order in the church, who regulated ecclesiastical matters over a

whole kingdom, or rather a district, of the Christian world: these were styled Patriarchs; and by-and-by, in the ordinary course of policy, a subordination took place even among these, and the Bishop of Rome was generally acknowledged in the right of his predecessor, St. Peter, as the head, or chief, of the Patriarchs. We shall see afterward how this Patriarch, by adding temporal power and authority to spiritual, contrived to maintain a supreme ascendancy, not only over all ecclesiastical persons, but civil governors and sovereign princes.

In the meantime, however, the Christian church was still considered, by the Roman emperors, in a hostile point of view. Even Trajan forgot, at times, the humanity of his character; and numbers of the Christians, in his reign and in that of his successor Adrian, were, under the pretence of a political necessity, subjected to all the rage of sanguinary persecution: nor was this intolerant zeal abated under those excellent princes the Antonines; and, in the succeeding reign of Severus, the whole provinces of the empire were stained with the blood of the Christian martyrs.

In the third century, the Christian church enjoyed greater tranquillity; but this was owing less to a spirit of humanity in the Roman emperors, than to particular political circumstances, and chiefly to the short, violent, and turbulent reigns of many of those who swayed the sceptre.

The Christian doctrines were not more vigorously combated by the *secular* arm, than by the pens of the heathen philosophers. Porphyry, a Syrian by birth, and a man of great abilities, wrote a long and most laborious work against Christianity; and Philostratus, one of the most eminent rhetoricians of that age, contrived a new method of attack, which was by drawing artful comparisons between the life and doctrines of Christ and those of the ancient philosophers. These attacks, however, were, on the whole, rather serviceable than dangerous to the cause of Christianity, since

they excited the zeal and abilities of many of the ablest Fathers of the church to defend its doctrines, and oppose, by their writings, the malevolent efforts of its enemies. The works of Origen—of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria—and of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage—are read at this day with much pleasure and profit; and, at the time they were written, contributed, in a most eminent degree, to the advancement of religion. It must, however, be observed, with regard to the works of Origen, that from one idea of his regarding the interpretation of the Scriptures, he exposes the Christian religion to be contaminated by every extravagance of the human brain. It was his notion that the Scriptures ought not always to be literally interpreted; and even where the literal sense was to be received, as in historical facts, that there was always a mystical and hidden meaning which these were intended to convey. It is easy to perceive, that as this leaves room for the utmost latitude of conjecture with regard to these hidden meanings, nothing could be more dangerous than the allowance of such mode of interpretation, and accordingly, it was productive of innumerable errors and dissensions. Christianity, however, on the whole, made the most rapid progress in the third century. A great part of the Gauls, of Germany, and of Britain, had now received the light of the gospel.

In the fourth century, the Christian religion was alternately persecuted and cherished by the Roman emperors. Under Diocletian, there was, for many years, a most sanguinary persecution, which arose less from a spirit of cruelty in that emperor than from the easiness of his temper in giving way to the persuasions of his son-in-law, Galerius, and the remonstrances of the heathen priests.

The church, we have seen, was restored to tranquillity by the accession of Constantine the Great, whose zeal for the propagation of Christianity, in the latter part of his reign, was as ardent—and, as some

have thought, as intemperate—as that of its enemies for its destruction. His three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans, without the genius of their father, inherited his religious principles, and were active in the extirpation of paganism and the promotion of Christianity.

We have seen how great was the reverse under the succeeding reign of Julian : genius, learning, philosophic moderation, heroic valour on the one hand, superstitious credulity, bigotry, and hypocrisy, on the other, composed this singularly inconsistent character. The methods which he took to undermine the Christian religion, we have observed, were dictated by the most consummate policy and artifice. His attempts to reform the pagan worship, and his depriving the Christians of the common privileges of citizens and of the benefit of the laws, were more fatal to the cause of religion than any other species of persecution. The succeeding emperors, Valentinian I., Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian II., contributed in a great degree to heal those wounds which Christianity had suffered from the attacks of Julian; but it was reserved for Theodosius to put a final period to the pagan superstition in the Roman empire.

In the history of the human mind there are no events more deserving of attention than the rise and fall of popular superstitions. As the polytheism, which had so long maintained its authority over the Roman empire, came to a final period at the time of which we now treat, it is worth our while to bestow some consideration upon an event of that magnitude and importance. The structure of the pagan religion in the Roman empire was so interwoven with its political constitution, as to possess a very strong hold on the minds of the people.

From the age of Numa to the reign of Gratian, the Romans preserved the regular succession of the several colleges of the sacerdotal order.\* Fifteen pontiffs

\* Gibbon's Roman Hist., ch. 28.



exercised supreme jurisdiction over all things and persons that were consecrated to the service of the gods, and determined all questions with regard to religion. Fifteen augurs observed the face of the heavens, and determined the success of the most important enterprises, according to the flight of birds. Fifteen keepers of the Sibylline books consulted the records of future events. Six vestals guarded the sacred fire. Seven epulos prepared the table of the gods, conducted the solemn processions, and regulated the ceremonies of the annual festivals. The *flamens* of Jupiter, of Mars, and Quirinus, were considered as the ministers of the tutelar gods of Rome. The *king* of the sacrifices represented the person of Numa and of his successors in the religious functions, which could be performed only by royal hands. The confraternities of the Salians and the Lupercals practised the most ridiculous rites, by way of recommending themselves to the favour of the gods. The authority which the Roman priests had formerly obtained in the councils of the republic was gradually weakened by the establishment of the imperial dignity, and by the removal of the seat of the empire; but the veneration of their sacred character was still protected by the laws and manners of their country, and they still continued, more especially the college of pontiffs, to exercise in the capitol, and sometimes in the provinces, the rights of their ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction. They received from the public revenue an ample salary, which liberally supplied the splendour of the priesthood, and the expenses of the religious worship of the state; as the service of the altar was not incompatible with the command of armies, the offices of pontiff or of augur were aspired to by the most illustrious of the Romans. Cicero, as well as Pliny, acknowledge that the office of augur was the height of their ambition. Even the Christian emperors did not refuse this ancient office of the highest dignity, but accepted like their predecessors, of the robe and ensigns of *Pontifex maximus*.

Gratian was the first who rejected those profane *insignia*. He applied to the service of the state or of the church the revenues of the priests and vestals, abolished their honours and immunities, and thus undermined the ancient fabric of Roman superstition, which had subsisted for eleven hundred years. Paganism was still, however, the constitutional religion of the senate. The temple in which they assembled was adorned by the statue and altar of Victory—a majestic female standing on a globe, with flowing garments, expanded wings, and in her hand a crown of laurel. The senators continued to take their solemn initiatory oaths upon the altar of the goddess, till this ancient monument was removed from its pedestal by the emperor Constantius. Julian had restored the altar of Victory; and Gratian once more abolished it, though he spared the public statues of the gods which were in the temples of the city. In the time of Theodosius, a majority of the senate voted an application to the emperor to restore the altar and statue of Victory; and the cause of paganism was artfully and eloquently pleaded by the senator Symmachus, as that of Christianity by the celebrated Ambrose, archbishop of Milan.

The dispute was managed on both sides with great ability. The argument of Symmachus was certainly the best that could be brought in support of his cause; he balances the certain effects of an adherence to ancient customs with the uncertain consequences of innovation. If, says he, the past ages of the Roman state have been crowned with glory and prosperity—if the devout people have obtained the blessings they solicited at the altars of the gods—is it not advisable to persevere in the same salutary practices, rather than risk the unknown dangers that may attend rash innovations? The reasoning was plausible. But the arguments of Ambrose had a more solid foundation; he exposed the futility of that blind and indolent maxim that *all* innovations are dangerous; he reprobated that

absurd veneration for antiquity, which would not only maintain mankind in childhood and ignorance, but discourage every improvement of science, and replunge the human race into their original barbarism. After removing that veil which shut out the light, he displayed the beauty and excellence of the Christian system, and finally prevailed, to the conviction of the senators, against the able advocate of paganism. In a full meeting of that order, the question was solemnly proposed by Theodosius, whether the worship of Jesus Christ or of Jupiter should be the religion of the Romans. Jupiter was degraded and condemned by a large majority. The decrees of the senate which proscribed the worship of idols were ratified by the general consent of the people. The citizens flocked to the churches to receive the sacrament of baptism, and the temples of the pagan deities were abandoned to ruin and contempt.

The downfall of paganism in the capital was soon followed by its extirpation in the provinces. Theodosius began by prohibiting sacrifices; and lest the temples should incite to the celebration of ancient ceremonies, he ordered them to be shut. But the zeal of the bishops and fathers of the church exceeded their commission: they marched at the head of numerous bands of their new proselytes, and determined to abolish every remnant of idolatry by levelling the temples with the ground. Happily, the skill and solidity with which many of those ancient buildings had been constructed preserved them from absolute ruin; a few likewise were saved by being converted into Christian churches. The temple of Serapis, at Alexandria, in a part of which was the celebrated library of the Ptolemys, was one of the most magnificent structures of the East. Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, had determined its downfall. The priests took arms in defence of their god, but were finally overpowered by the strength of numbers; the temple was ransacked, the library pillaged and destroyed, and the awful statue

of the god himself underwent the general fate. The catastrophe of Serapis is eloquently described by Gibbon. A great number of plates of different metals, artificially joined together, composed the majestic figure of the deity, who touched on either side the walls of the sanctuary. The aspect of Serapis, his sitting posture, and the sceptre which he bore in his left hand, were extremely similar to the ordinary representations of Jupiter. It was confidently reported, that if any impious hand should dare to violate the majesty of the god, the heavens and the earth would instantly return to their original chaos. An intrepid soldier, animated by zeal, and armed with a weighty battle-axe, ascended the ladder—and even the Christian multitude expected with some anxiety the event of the combat. He aimed a vigorous stroke against the cheek of Serapis; the cheek fell to the ground; the thunder was still silent, and both the heavens and the earth continued to preserve their accustomed order and tranquillity. The victorious soldier repeated his blows; the huge idol was overthrown and broken in pieces, and the limbs of Serapis were ignominiously dragged through the streets of Alexandria. His mangled carcass was burnt in the amphitheatre, amid the shouts of the populace; and many persons attributed their conversion to this discovery of the impotence of the tutelar deity. After the fall of Serapis some hopes were entertained by the Pagans that the indignation of the gods would be expressed by the refusal of the Nile's annual inundation; but the waters began to swell with most unusual rapidity. They now comforted themselves that the same indignation was to be expressed by a deluge; but were mortified to find at last that the inundation brought with it no other than its usual salutary and fertilizing effects.\*

\* The Egyptians remarked, that when the Nile did not rise to the height of twelve cubits, a famine was generally the consequence—as was likewise the case when it rose above six-

Theodosius was too good a politician to adopt a persecuting system. The temples, it is true, were shut up, sacrifices prohibited, and idols destroyed; but still the ancient opinions were entertained and tolerated: no universal conformity was requisite, and the civil and military honours of the empire were bestowed without distinction on Christians and on pagans. The utmost freedom was allowed in speech and in writing on the subject of religion, as is evident by what remains of the works of Zozimus, Eunapius, and other teachers of the Platonic school, who attacked Christianity with the utmost virulence. There was great wisdom in this conduct of Theodosius. Paganism fell by a rapid, yet by a gentle decline; and twenty-eight years after the death of Theodosius, the vestiges of the ancient religion were scarcely discernible in the Roman empire.

A superstition, in many respects as absurd and irrational, began to pollute the Christian church in those ages, and still continues to maintain a very extensive influence. This was the worship of saints and relics. At Rome, the bones of St. Peter and St. Paul—or rather what were believed to be such—were removed from their graves one hundred and fifty years after their death, and deposited in magnificent shrines. In the following ages, Constantinople, which could boast no treasures of that kind within her own walls, had recourse to the provinces, and acquired from them the supposed bodies of St. Andrew, St. Luke, and St. Timothy, after these had been dead for three hundred years. But these sacred treasures were appropriated solely to the churches of the capitals of the empire; other cities and their churches borrowed portions of these older relics; and where they had not interest to procure these, their priests had dexterity to discover relics of their own. It was easier for the vulgar mind

teen cubits. The register of the river was a well within the temple of Serapis, at Memphis.



to approach in prayer the image, or simply the idea of a holy man—one who had been on earth subject to like passions with themselves—than to raise their imaginations to the tremendous and incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Power: hence the prayers to saints, and the peculiar devotion to one out of many—as he to whom most frequent court was paid would be naturally held to take the greatest interest in the welfare of his votary.

As the objects of religion were become more familiar to the imagination, it was not wonderful that such rites and ceremonies should be introduced as were best fitted to affect the senses of the vulgar. The pompous pageantry of the pagan superstition was soon rivalled by that of the Christian; and as the polytheism of the former found a parallel in the numerous train of saints and martyrs of the latter, the superstitions and absurd ceremonies of both came very soon to have a near resemblance.

The attachment of the pagan systems of philosophy, particularly the Platonic, which found its votaries among many of the Christian doctors at this period, led to a variety of innovations in point of doctrine, which in a little time acquired so deep a root as to be considered as essential parts of the Christian system. Such, for example, was the notion of an intermediate state, in which the soul was to be purified by fire from the corruptions and vices of the flesh: hence also the celibacy of the priests, and various other notions which yet prevail in the church of Rome, and have in the minds of the people acquired from time an equal authority with the express institutions of the gospel.

With regard to the celibacy of the priests, we know that in the *primitive* church all the orders of the clergy were allowed to marry.\* It was, however, thought, that as abstinence and mortification was a Christian

\* 1st Epistle to Timothy, ch. iii.

duty, there was more sanctity and virtue in celibacy than in wedlock.

Monastic institutions had likewise their origin in the fourth century, the most destructive species of superstition that ever took hold of the minds of mankind. But of these and of their progress—of the diversities of their orders, and of their rapid increase over all the Christian kingdoms, we shall afterward treat more at large, in our account of the state of the church in the age of Charlemagne.

In our next chapter we shall pursue the outlines of the history of the Romans, to the entire extinction of the empire of the west—a period which finishes the delineation of ancient history.

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## CHAPTER V.

Last period of the Roman History—Arcadius and Honorius—Theodosius II.—His Code of Laws—Attila—Progress of the Goths—Gothic Kingdom of Italy.

WE have now arrived at the last period of the empire in the west, when everything tending irresistibly to decline prognosticated a speedy and absolute extinction of the Roman name in those regions where it first was known.

The barbarous nations, we have observed from frequent inroads, though most commonly repulsed, had yet gradually begun to establish themselves in the frontier provinces: we had remarked the progress they made in the reigns of Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, and Theodosius; but at this period our attention was solicited to the consideration of an object of peculiar importance, the extinction of paganism in the Roman empire, and the full establishment of the Christian religion. This great event naturally led to a brief re-

prospective view of the progress of Christianity during the four preceding centuries. We now proceed to a rapid delineation of this last period of the history of the Romans—from the end of the reign of Theodosius, to the fall of the Western Empire.

Theodosius the Great, who, by the death of Valentinian II., enjoyed the undivided sovereignty of the empires of the East and West, made a partition upon his death-bed between his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, assigned the Eastern empire to the former, and the Western to the latter.\* At the time of the accession of these princes, Arcadius was seventeen, and Honorius ten years of age. Their ministers were *Rufinus* and *Stilicho*, to whom Theodosius had intrusted the government during the nonage of his sons. Rufinus, a man of no principle, but of great ambition, soon became jealous of an associate in power; and in order to gratify his mean ambition, he considered it a small matter to make a sacrifice of his country. Courting his own elevation in the public ruin, he invited the barbarian nations to invade the empire.† The Huns were not slow in obeying the summons. They poured down from Caucasus, and overspread in an instant Armenia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Syria. A band of the Goths at the same time, under the command of Alaric, made dreadful havoc in the prov-

\* The following was the division of the empire between these princes: Honorius had the sovereignty of Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain; with the provinces of Noricum, Pannonia, and Dalmatia. Arcadius governed Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, and the whole country, from the Lower Danube to the confines of Persia and Æthiopia. Illyrium was divided between the two princes.—*Gibbon, Decline and Fall*, ch. 29.

† That Rufinus carried on a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians, has not, I believe, been directly proved; but his frequent visits to the camp of the Goths, and the circumstance of their sparing his estates amid the general devastation, were considered as strong presumptive evidence of his treason.

inces between the Adriatic and Constantinople. Stilicho, the emperor's chief general, who was possessed of excellent military abilities, made head against these barbarians with considerable success; until, by the infamous machination of his rival Rufinus, the greater part of his troops were compelled to leave their commander, and purposely called off upon another service, at the very eve of an engagement with Alaric, which, in all probability, would have given the Romans a decisive victory. Stilicho was obliged to retreat with precipitation; but this involuntary dishonour was amply revenged by his troops, who no sooner returned to the Eastern capital, than, with furious indignation, they massacred Rufinus in the presence of the emperor Arcadius.\*

Alaric the Goth, in the meantime, ravaged Greece, took the city of Athens, and, pouring down on the Peloponnesus, laid waste the whole country. He was again opposed by Stilicho, whose success was a second time disappointed by the eunuch Eutropius, who had succeeded Rufinus in his influence over the weak and dissolute Arcadius. This abandoned minion made a peace with Alaric, and even bestowed upon the Goth the government of eastern Illyria, under which denomination was at that time comprehended the whole of Greece. How miserable must have been the abasement of the eastern empire at this time, when the Goths had thus established themselves under the very walls of the capital!

The influence of the eunuch Eutropius was unbounded with his sovereign; but though courted, as we may suppose, like all other ministers, by the parasites of the court, he was deservedly detested by the people. A striking monument of his fears from the popular odium, and the apprehension of undergoing that fate which he merited, appears in that most san-

\* A scene which is described by the poet Claudian (lib. ii. in Rufin.) in strong but horrid colours.

guinary of the Roman statutes, the law of Arcadius and Honorius for the punishment of those who should conspire the death of the emperor's ministers. A capital punishment was inflicted on the offender himself; it is declared that his children shall be perpetually infamous, incapable of all inheritance, of all office or employment; that they shall languish in want and misery, so that life itself shall be a punishment to them, and death a consolation.\* Amid the other laws of Arcadius and Honorius, many of which are remarkable for their elemency and moderation, this sanguinary statute would strike us with just surprise, were it not known to have been framed by the infamous Eutropius for the security of his own precarious authority, and as a shelter for himself against the public odium.

Secure as he now imagined himself in the favour of his sovereign, and defended by the terror of his own uncontrolled authority, this base eunuch endeavoured to engross the whole power of the government. He caused the weak Arcadius to create him a Patrician, to honour him with the title of *father to the emperor*, and at length to confer on him the consulship. His image, preceded by the fasces, was carried in triumph through all the cities of the East, but was more generally saluted with hissing than applause. At length that insolence, which, in mean souls, is the usual attendant of undeserved elevation, so far transported him beyond the bounds of decorum, that, having affronted the emperess Eudoxia, a high-spirited princess, she painted his character in such colours to her husband Arcadius, that he dismissed him from all his dignities, gave him up to the cries of the people, who demanded justice upon him as a traitor, and caused him to be publicly beheaded.

Arcadius, however, was not emancipated from his

\* Ut his denique perpetua egestate sordentibus, sit et mors solatium et vita supplicium.—*Codex. Just. l. 9. tit. 8. l. 5.*



bondage; he only changed his governor: for Gainas, a Goth, the rival of Eutropius, and who had been instrumental in accelerating his downfall, succeeded to his whole power and influence. He would have proved a dangerous minister, as he aimed at nothing less than a declared share of the empire; but his ambition was checked in the beginning of his career, for he lost his life in an attack made by the Huns, in the neighbourhood of the Danube.

Alaric, we observed, had obtained from Arcadius the sovereignty of Illyria. This ambitious prince was not so to be satisfied. His army proclaimed him king of the Visigoths, and he prepared to penetrate into Italy, and take possession of Rome. He passed the Alps, and Rome trembled for her safety, but was preserved by the policy, or rather treachery of Stilicho, who commanded the armies of Honorius. He drew Alaric into a negotiation, under the notion of giving him a settlement beyond the Alps, and then suddenly fell upon his army, while unsuspecting of an attack; Alaric was forced to return to Illyria, but meditated a full and terrible revenge.

On this occasion, Honorius celebrated at Rome a splendid triumph, and a monument was erected, recording, in the proudest terms, the eternal defeat of the Goths, *Gætarum nationem in omne ævum domitam*.\* But this vain *eternity* was bounded by the revolution of a very few months.

The Gothic prince, at the head of an immense army, appeared again in Italy, and determined to overthrow the capital of Honorius. Rome was panic-struck;—resistance appeared fruitless; and Stilicho exerted his political talents in negotiating a truce with Alaric, for the payment of an immense sum of money. Four thousand pounds weight of gold was the sum stipulated, on promise of which, Alaric returned again into Illyria. This was the last public service of Stili-

\* Mascou, Hist. of Anc. Germ., viii. 12.

cho;—the man who had repeatedly saved his country from destruction, fell a victim at last to the jealousy of his contemptible sovereign, and to the machinations of a rival, Olympius, who wished to supplant him in his power. He was beheaded by the mandate of Honorius. The character and talents of Stilicho are recorded in the poems of Claudian, whose genius deserved to have been the ornament of a better age. Alaric, soon after, made his demand for the promised tribute. It was contemptuously refused by Honorius, and the incensed Goth again entered Italy, and with amazing celerity penetrated to the gates of Rome: he made himself master of the Tiber, cut off the city from all supply, both by land and water, and reduced it to such extremity, that deputies were sent by Honorius, who again purchased a cessation of hostilities for five thousand pounds weight of gold and thirty thousand of silver; but to secure its payment, the Goth insisted that several of the principal citizens should put their children into his hands as hostages. On these terms Alaric again returned.

The Alani, Suevi, and Vandals, taking advantage of these disorders in the Western empire, passed the Pyrenean mountains, and desolated all Spain. Their ravages were beyond imagination dreadful, and these calamities were aggravated by a pestilence and famine, which then raged with fury in that unhappy country. The barbarians divided the kingdom, and were no sooner settled in their possessions than, by a wonderful reverse of character, they became a mild, humane, and industrious people. They were now known under the general denomination of Vandals. The Romans kept possession of that part of Spain now called New Castile, and the Vandals had all the rest of the kingdom.

Alaric now renewed his demand on Honorius for the stipulated sum; still it was refused, with equal perfidy and imprudence. The Goth had been too forbearing; his patience was at length exhausted, and

he laid siege to Rome for the third time, took the city, and abandoned it to be pillaged by his troops.\* Still, however, he was humane in his revenge; he ordered his soldiers to be sparing of blood, he commanded that no senator should be put to death; that the honour of the women should remain inviolate; that the churches should be sanctuaries to all who betook themselves to them for shelter—and that the public edifices should be preserved from destruction; and these orders were faithfully obeyed. Alaric might have reigned in Italy, but his views extended now to Sicily, and to the conquest of Africa. For these great enterprises he was busied in preparation when he died suddenly, leaving for his successor, his brother Ataulphus. The Goths had a custom of concealing the burying-place of their great men. They turned aside the current of a small river, and dug a grave in the bed, there burying Alaric, and then returning the water to its course.

Honorius, equally indolent and despicable as his brother Arcadius, was so far from seizing the opportunity of Alaric's death to regain the lost provinces of the empire, that he made a treaty with Ataulphus, and having broke it with his usual perfidy, the Goth was naturally provoked to further encroachments. Honorius was glad to purchase a peace by giving him some of those provinces which still remained to the Romans in Spain, together with his sister Placidia in marriage. Thus we see the Goths gradually uniting themselves with the empire, and acquiring a connexion by the rights of blood with those dominions of which they aspired at the possession. Honorius, much about the same time, allowed to the Burgundians, another tribe of northern barbarians, a just title to their conquests in Gaul. Ataulphus, the Goth, died soon after, recommending to his brother and successor

\* See a very minute and curious picture of the state of Rome, and the manners of the Romans at this period, drawn by Mr. Gibbon, chiefly from Ammianus Marcellinus (lib. xiv. c. 6, and lib. xxviii. c. 4.)—*Gibbon's Rom. Hist.* ch. 31.

to preserve the friendly alliance they had formed with the Romans.

Meantime, Arcadius, in the East, was wholly governed by his emperess Eudoxia. This weak and dissolute prince died in the year 408, leaving the Eastern empire to his son Theodosius II., a child of seven years of age.

Pulcheria, the elder sister of Theodosius, on the death of her father, took the sole government of the empire, in the name of her infant brother. She was a prudent and intelligent princess. The Eastern empire enjoyed under her administration, which the weakness of her brother allowed to be of forty years' continuance, all the blessings of good order and tranquillity.\*

At this time (the beginning of the fifth century) in the west of Europe, is supposed to have been laid the foundation of the French monarchy by Pharamond. But of this, and the doubts attending the existence of this prince, we shall afterward treat more particularly under the first period of modern history. Honorius died in the year 423. The death of a weak and of a vicious prince would, in former times, have been accounted a blessing, but the empire was now labouring under that universal decay which was beyond a remedy.

It has been justly remarked that, notwithstanding

\* "Pulcheria," says Mr. Gibbon, "alone discharged the important task of instructing her brother in the arts of government, but her precepts may countenance some suspicion of her capacity, or of the purity of her intentions. She taught him to maintain a grave and majestic deportment, to walk, to hold his robes, to seat himself on his throne in a manner worthy of a great prince; to abstain from laughter; to listen with condescension; to return suitable answers; to assume by turns a serious or a placid countenance; in a word, to represent with grace and dignity the external figure of a Roman emperor. But Theodosius was never excited to support the weight and glory of an illustrious name."—*Gibbon, Decl. and Fall*, ch. xxxii.

the despicable character of both these emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, their laws, with few exceptions, breathe often the most admirable sentiments, and the wisest political principles: but this proves no more than that there were some men of abilities who were employed in framing them; it was another thing to enforce their observance, and while that was neglected, as the deplorable situation of the empire too well declares, they were words without meaning, empty sounds, to which the public administration of government was a daily contradiction.

Theodosius II. is famous in history for the celebrated code of laws which bears his name. In the view of reforming the complicated system of jurisprudence of which the multiplicity of contradictory statutes formed a most inconsistent mass, he caused a code to be composed solely of the laws of the Christian emperors, which from that time he declared should be the only statutes in force. The new laws added from time to time to this collection were called *Novellæ*, and this code was enforced by Valentinian III., the successor of Honorius in the Western empire, as it was by Theodosius in the East.\* It is curious to remark that this code of laws subsisted only for ninety years in the East, though in the West it remained in force after the destruction of the empire, and was partly adopted by the Visigoths. Genseric, king of the Vandals, in the meantime, established a formidable power in Africa; he soon made himself master of the Roman province,† and while Theodosius

\* It is not a little extraordinary that Mr. Gibbon, in the whole of his account of the reign of Theodosius II., has never once mentioned this celebrated code of laws, which is certainly not the least remarkable circumstance relative to the life and character of this insignificant emperor.

† In this barbarian war, Carthage, which, in the course of five hundred and eighty-five years from the time of its destruction by the younger Scipio, had risen to the rank of a splendid and opulent city, under the government of a Roman precon-



was obliged to employ his whole force against the Huns, that barbarian procured himself to be acknowledged for an independent sovereign, who had a just title to his conquests.

The Huns were at this time governed by two brothers, Attila and Bleda. Attila joined to great courage and excellent political talents an unbounded ambition. The two brothers, after overrunning Tartary to the borders of China, had crossed the Danube, and laid waste the Roman provinces of Mœsia and Thrace. Attila, impatient of a divided power, murdered his brother, and proceeded to extend his conquests from the eastern ocean to the *Sinus Codanus*, or the Baltic. Theodosius attempted to sooth him by conferring on him the title of general of the Romans, but was soon glad to purchase a peace of his general at the price of six thousand pounds weight of gold, and a tribute besides of two thousand pounds, to be paid annually in all time to come. Theodosius became more despicable in the eyes of Attila by an unsuccessful attempt to procure his assassination, which Attila pardoned, though at the same time with this severe reproach, that he considered him as a vile and perfidious slave, who had traitorously conspired to murder his master.\* Theodosius II. died soon after having reigned ingloriously for forty-two years. He left an only daughter, who was married to Valentinian III., emperor of the West, but the imbecility of this prince prevented him from availing himself of that title to both empires. Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius, who had in reality governed the empire during the whole reign of her weak and insignificant brother, now boldly placed her-

sul, was taken by Genseric the inhabitants completely stripped of their wealth, and all the lands of the proconsular province divided by the conqueror among his Vandal officers.—*Procop. de Bello Vandal.* l. i. c. v. *Gibbon*, chap. xxxiii.

\* See *Gibbon*, chap. xxxiv., for a detail of this transaction, curiously descriptive of the character and mode of the life of the Huns.

self on the throne, and at the same time married Marcianus, a soldier of fortune, and their joint title was acknowledged by the Eastern empire. The West was in the lowest state of imbecility. Rome, unable to defend her provinces, allowed them to drop off without any attempt to retain them. It was at this time that the Britons, by a very melancholy deputation, implored the Romans to protect them against the Picts and Scots.\* “We are,” said they, “in the utmost misery, nor have we any refuge left us; the barbarians drive us to the sea, the sea drives us back upon the barbarians.” In return to this miserable supplication, the Romans gave them to understand that their own situation was such that they could now afford them nothing but compassion. The Britons, therefore, in despair, made an application to the Saxons, a people settled at the mouth of the river Elbe. These, with the Angles from Jutland, made themselves masters of the country which they were invited to protect, and established by degrees the Heptarchy, or seven distinct kingdoms, which subsisted till the age of Charlemagne, when they were united into one monarchy by Egbert. But of these transactions we shall treat more particularly in our account of the first period of the history of Britain.

\* The feeble and distracted state of the empire had now for a long course of years allowed no attention to be given to this distant province. The legions had been gradually withdrawn, and about forty years before this period, under the reign of Honorius, the Romans had entirely left the island, and Britain was regarded even by the empire as an independent country—See *Procop. de Bello Vandal.* l. i. c. 2.—*Bede, Hist. Gent. Anglican.* lib. i. c. 12.—*Gibbon's Rom. Hist.* chap. xxxi. The nature of the government that subsisted in Britain, and the state of that country during this interval of forty years, till the Saxon invasion, can only be conjectured. Mr. Gibbon has given a fanciful picture of it, toward the end of the chapter above quoted. According to his idea, the country was ruled by the authority of the clergy, the nobles, and the municipal towns.

Attila, in the meantime, meditated the total destruction of the empire. He hesitated at first whether to turn his arms toward the east or the west.\* Genseric, king of the Vandals, ambitious of a share in the general devastation, invited the Hun to begin his attack upon Gaul. Attila begun his progress at the head of five hundred thousand men, the Gepidæ, Rugii, Turcilingi, and Ostrogoths, each led by their own prince, though all under the banners of Attila.

Ætius, at that time general of the Romans, and a man of remarkable abilities, had the address to render Genseric the Vandal apprehensive of his own safety, and to persuade him to join the Romans against the invaders. The Visigoths, too, took part with the empire, and the army of Ætius was likewise increased by the Franks, Burgundians, and several other nations, from the universal dread of the arms of Attila. The hostile powers came to a decisive engagement in the plains of Champagne. One hundred and sixty-two thousand men are supposed to have fallen in this battle.† Attila was overpowered by the superior military skill of Ætius, and obliged to make a precipitate retreat. Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, was killed in the engagement.

But Attila, though foiled in this attempt, returned in the following year with fresh forces. The Romans

\* Previous to his determination, he sent a defiance to both the courts, and his ambassadors saluted both the emperors in the same tone of authority. "Attila, *my* lord and *thy* lord, commands thee to provide a palace for his immediate reception."—*Gibbon*, chap. xxxv.

† "Bellum atrox," says Jornandes, "multiplex, immane, pertnax, cui simile nulla usquam narrat antiquitas: ubi talia gesta referuntur ut nihil esset quod in vitâ suâ conspiceret potuisset egregius, qui hujus miraculi privaretur aspectu."

"A fierce, doubtful, cruel, and obstinate battle, of the like of which all preceding time affords no example: in relation to which such deeds are reported, that nothing that might happen in the life of one not a witness of this miraculous conflict, could be considered remarkable."

had not as yet had time to recruit; they retreated before the barbarians, and left the country without defence. The districts of Venetia and Liguria being evacuated by their inhabitants, part of these betook themselves for shelter to the islands in the Adriatic gulf, where they built huts, and laid the first foundation of the illustrious city and state of Venice.

Valentinian III., shut up in Rome, sent to Attila to sue for peace, and promised an immense tribute. On these terms the Hun withdrew, and the Romans were soon after delivered by his death from the terror of his name and arms. He was known in the empire by the epithet of the Scourge of God.

His dominions were ruined by the dissensions of his sons, among whom they were divided. They formed distinct settlements in Illyria, Mœsia, Dacia, and at the mouth of the Danube, and several of them became the allies of the empire. The Ostrogoths received from Marcian all Pannonia, from upper Mœsia to Noricum, and from Dalmatia to the Danube.

Valentinian, sunk in debaucheries, and the dupe of his parasites, was persuaded by false insinuations to destroy his general Ætius, the man who had saved the empire from absolute destruction, but the abandoned prince himself was soon after assassinated by one of his favourites.

A minute detail of the transactions of the times at which we are now arrived would be equally tedious and unimportant. We shall content ourselves with the leading facts. Marcian was succeeded in the Eastern empire by Leo, who, upon his death, bequeathed the empire to Zeno, a weak, wicked, and profligate man. The empire of the West, after Valentinian III., had for some time a succession of princes, or rather of names, for history records of them no transactions which merit the smallest notice. The Gothic nations continued their progress. Euric, king of the Visigoths, had subdued almost the whole of Spain as well as the southern part of Gaul. Nepos,

who then held the empire of the West, sent his general Orestes to oppose the conquests of Euric, but the general turned his arms against his prince, and, dethroning Nepos, raised to the empire his own son Romulus, surnamed Augustus, or *Augustulus*. In him the empire of the West was doomed to come to a final period.

Odoacer, a prince of the Heruli, with a formidable army, had found his way into Italy. He attacked Pavia, where Orestes had fled for security, and having taken that city and put to death Orestes, he consented to give Augustulus his life, on his resigning the throne. The terms were complied with, and Odoacer was now in reality what he styled himself, *king of Italy*. Thus ended the Western empire of the Romans, having subsisted, from the building of Rome, one thousand two hundred and twenty-four years.\*

Ingenious men may point out a variety of internal as well as external circumstances, which had their operation in producing the decline, and at length the ruin of this immense fabric; but they may be all reduced to one single head. The fall of the Roman empire was the inevitable effect of its overgrown extension. The commonwealth subsisted by the virtu-

\* In a fragment of a poem of Gray's, which has been preserved by Mr. Mason, a very fine passage occurs, painting, in all the force of his splendid style of poetic description, the irruption of the barbarous nations into Italy:—

“Oft o’er the trembling nations, from afar,  
Has Scythia breathed the living cloud of war;  
And where the deluge burst, with sweeping sway,  
Their arms, their kings, their gods were rolled away.  
As oft have issued, host impelling host,  
The blue-eyed myriads of the Baltic coast;  
The prostrate south to the destroyer yields  
Her boasted titles and her golden fields;  
With grim delight, the brood of winter view  
A brighter day, and heavens of azure hue,  
Scent the new fragrance of the blushing rose,  
And quaff the pendent vintage as it grows.”

*Mason’s Life of Gray*, p. 196.



ous and patriotic ardour of the citizens; but the passion for conquest, which at first found sufficient scope in the domestic wars among the Italian states, was, after their reduction, necessarily extended to a distance. Remote dominion relaxed the patriotic affection, which of necessity grew the weaker, the more extensive were its objects. The vices of the conquered nations infected the victorious legions, and foreign luxuries, corrupted their commanders. Selfish interest took the place of public virtue; the people were enslaved by despots, who, regarding as the first object the security of their own power, found it often their wisest policy to abase that martial spirit which was no less formidable to the master of the state than to its former enemies. Thus the military of the Romans went gradually to decay, because it was purposely depressed by the emperors; and thus their extensive dominions, wanting their necessary support of brave, of virtuous, and of disciplined troops, fell an easy prey to that torrent of barbarians which overwhelmed them.

Historians universally agree that the Romans gained by their change of masters. Odoacer retained the imperial laws, the officers, and the form of government; and he diminished the taxes. He, with an affected show of moderation, sent to Zeno the imperial ornaments, and requested for himself only the dignity of patrician, which Zeno had the prudence not to refuse. This spiritless emperor was now embroiled with the Ostrogoths, who were settled in Pannonia and Thrace, and were governed by two kings of the name of Theodoric; the younger had been educated at Constantinople, and loaded with honours by Zeno. At the request of Theodoric, Zeno granted him permission to attempt the conquest of Italy, transferring it to him as a kingdom in case he should succeed in wresting it from Odoacer. Zeno died soon after. Theodoric, followed by the whole nation of the Ostrogoths, broke into Italy with impetuous fury. Odoacer

met him between Aquileia and the Julian Alps, but was defeated. A second engagement ensued at Verona, and a third on the banks of the river Addua, in all of which Theodoric was successful. Odoacer was forced to shut himself up in the Ravenna, where for two years and a half he sustained an obstinate siege. At length, compelled by famine, he was driven to a negotiation, by which he surrendered all Italy to Theodoric, reserving to himself the titles of royalty. What the motive was is now uncertain; but Theodoric, a few days after, put him to death with his own hand—a deed which, considering the excellent and generous character of that prince, there is every reason to presume had a just cause.

Italy had begun to taste of happiness under Odoacer; it was still increased by the new monarch. Theodoric showed what profound political talents are capable of effecting even in the most unpromising situation, and how much public happiness is dependant on the virtues and talents of the sovereign. I shall afterward have occasion pretty fully to describe the administration, and illustrate the character, of this excellent prince. Without drawing a sword after the death of Odoacer, he enjoyed the kingdom of Italy as if it had been his natural inheritance. He allied himself with the barbarous nations around him. He married the daughter of Clovis, king of the Franks, who, in the year 486, had annihilated the Roman power in Gaul; he gave one of his daughters to Alaric, king of the Visigoths; another to Gondebald, king of the Burgundians; and his sister to Thrasamond, king of the Vandals; thus establishing a bond of union and harmony among the neighbouring princes, but where it was not observed, enforcing it by his arms.

In the latter part of his life, having his temper embittered by suspicions of treasonable conspiracies, he became for a while severe, and even cruel, in his administration. The learned Boetius, who had formerly been high in his favour, falling under these suspicions,

was put to death. During the confinement preceding his death, he composed that excellent treatise "*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*." The heart of Theodoric awaking afterward to that humanity of disposition which was natural to him, he sunk into deep remorse and melancholy, and died at the age of seventy-four. He was succeeded by his grandson Athalaric; during whose infancy his mother Amalasonta held the reins of government with such admirable political wisdom and moderation, that the people were not sensible of the loss of her father.

While such was the state of Italy under his Gothic sovereigns, the empire of the East was under the government of Justinian. This prince began his reign with no favourable dispositions toward him on the part of his subjects, as it was known that he had countenanced the commission of great enormities, and been concerned in several assassinations of those whom he either feared or hated. The truth is, that, if the Roman name seems to rise from its abasement for a while during the reign of this prince, it was less from the virtues, talents, or abilities of the emperor, than from the uncommon merit of his generals; yet to these generals he behaved with the most shameful ingratitude. He was in his own character a weak, vain, and despotic man; but he was fond of study; and if he had any talent, it was in jurisprudence. He was a rancorous enemy to the ancient Greek philosophy, and he abolished by an edict the schools of Athens, which had produced a constant succession of teachers from the days of Socrates, during a period of nine centuries.\* Justinian wished to bring about a league of amity with the Persians, who were dangerous enemies to the empire; but Cabades, their sovereign, treating his embassy with contempt, Justinian sent against them his general Belisarius, who had already signalized himself by his services. He defeated

\* See Gibbon, vol. iv. p. 112, et seq.

them at Dara; they revenged their disgrace, however, in the following year, by gaining a victory over Belisarius at Callinicum, who was prompted to engage at a disadvantage, from the intemperate ardour of his troops. This want of success Justinian thought proper to punish by recalling Belisarius, who was doomed to be often the sport of fortune, and the victim of weakness, caprice, and ingratitude. Cabades, the Persian, dying at this time, was succeeded by Chosroes, an able prince, to whom Justinian meanly a second time proffered terms of accommodation. Chosroes granted him a peace, but upon the most humiliating conditions. He received eleven thousand pounds weight of gold, and several important fortresses.

The city of Constantinople had been harassed, during the two last reigns, with violent popular factions, which had arisen from the intemperate fondness of the people for the diversions of the circus—a striking indication of the most irretrievable degeneracy of national character. The factions took the names of the green, the blue, and the red, from the dresses worn by the charioteers of the different parties. Justinian espoused with zeal the faction of the blue, while his queen Theodora, with equal intemperance, took part with the green. Her party proceeded so far as publicly to insult the emperor; and, upon the punishment of some of their ringleaders, took up arms to avenge their cause, and proclaimed Hypatius, a man allied to the blood-royal, for their monarch. Justinian appeared and offered indemnity, on condition of their returning to their duty, but they compelled him to retreat for safety to his palace. The injured Belisarius, who had not forgot his allegiance or his affection for his country, shocked at these proceedings, speedily assembled the troops, and attacking the rebels with a dreadful slaughter, at length brought all into submission. Justinian meanly proclaimed this deplorable victory over the whole empire.

Belisarius was now again to be employed in more  
P\*

glorious services. Gelimer, king of the Vandals in Africa, having mounted the throne by deposing Hilderic the lawful monarch, Justinian sent a remonstrance in favour of Hilderic, which Gelimer treated with contempt. He resolved to carry war into Africa, and the conduct of it was committed to Belisarius, who in a few months routed Gelimer, abolished entirely the monarchy of the Vandals, and completed the conquest of Africa. Ungenerous suspicions again influenced the weak Justinian against this man, who was the support and honour of his empire; and Belisarius was obliged to return to Constantinople, to vindicate his injured reputation. He came off with glory, and a triumph was decreed him, which was adorned by the captive Gelimer.

It is not a little surprising to see enterprises of the highest importance begun and carried through by a weak and imprudent monarch; but Justinian was fortunate in his generals, though never prince was less worthy of being so.

Athalaric, the Goth, a weak and debauched prince, had died in Italy, of which the government was still in the hands of his mother, Amalasonta. After the death of her son, she had raised to the throne her cousin Theodates, who infamously repaid that service by putting her to death. Justinian, who considered himself as the protector of the Gothic monarchy, in order to avenge this atrocious deed, sent Belisarius into Italy with an army. He marched to the gates of Rome, which surrendered without an attack; he possessed himself of the city, and with five thousand men undertook to defend it against one hundred thousand of the rebel Ostrogoths, who sat down to besiege him. The particulars of this war it is not to our purpose minutely to trace. It is sufficient to say, that after various successes, the Goths themselves, filled with admiration at the character of Belisarius, requested him to accept of the crown of Italy; but that generous and heroic man refused the offer of a kingdom, incapable



— of betraying the interests of his sovereign, although he had repeatedly experienced his ingratitude. He declared that he had sufficient glory in reducing the capital of the Western empire to submission to its ancient masters.

Italy again attempted to withdraw herself from the newly-imposed yoke of the empire. Totila, the present viceroy, inherited the courage and the virtues of Theodoric; he raised a considerable army, and, defeating the Romans, made himself master of Lucania, Apulia, Calabria, and Naples. Belisarius was sent a second time into Italy, but with so inconsiderable a body of troops that he was obliged to shut himself up in Ravenna. Rome, holding out for the emperor, was in the meantime besieged and taken by Totila, who generously spared the inhabitants; and, convoking the senate, drew a striking picture of the difference between the gentle government of Theodoric and Amalasonta, and their late oppressions; and concluded with a severe reproach for their treachery to a nation to whom they were so highly indebted. Totila had resolved to destroy Rome; but the city was saved by a remonstrance from Belisarius, who convinced the Goth, that to save that capital, the glory of the world, would contribute more to his honour than to destroy it. Totila contented himself with dispersing its inhabitants; but in this he acted imprudently, for Belisarius immediately took possession, and defended it with vigour and success. At length, the weakness of his army, and the increasing strength of the Goths, obliged that able general entirely to evacuate Italy, and to return to Constantinople, where the wealth which he had accumulated threw an unfavourable stain upon his character, which it is not easy to remove. Totila retook Rome, which he rebuilt and new peopled; afterward, however, the imperial arms meeting with some success in Italy, he became desirous of coming to an accommodation with Justinian. The Goth offered large concessions and an annual tribute, and obliged

himself to serve the emperor in all his wars. These terms, however, were obstinately and haughtily refused. Such is the character of a little mind, mean, servile, and submissive under the pressure of adversity; imperious, domineering, and inflexible upon the smallest glimpse of prosperous fortune. Contemning the offers of allegiance from Totila, he sent a more powerful army against him than he had ever sent into Italy. Narses, a eunuch, but an able general, commanded; and in a decisive engagement in the duchy of Urbino, the Goths were defeated, and the gallant Totila slain in battle. In a second engagement his successor, Theia, met with a similar fate; all Italy, in fine, was reconquered; and the Gothic monarchy, founded by Theodoric, was now extinguished. Theodoric and Totila may be compared with the greatest men of antiquity; and the Gothic nation, and particularly the Ostrogoths, who settled in Italy, instead of that contempt with which they have been treated by Procopius and some other writers, deserve, in many respects, the greatest regard and veneration.

Narses, who had destroyed the Gothic monarchy, and completed the conquest of Italy, governed that kingdom with great ability for thirteen years, when he was recalled, and ignominiously treated by Justin, successor to Justinian, a weak, imprudent, and voluptuous prince. It is said, that in revenge he invited the Lombards into Italy; a fact which is not at all improbable. These were one of the many nations from Scandinavia, but whose distinct origin is very uncertain; they overrun, and made themselves masters of the greatest part of the country in the year 568.

The final and irretrievable loss of Italy was not the only misfortune with which Justin had to struggle. Chosroes, that scourge of the empire, broke the fifty years' truce which he had concluded with Justinian; and the Romans were now again involved in a Persian war, which was not terminated till several years

afterward, under the reign of Heraclius, in the 626th year of the Christian era.

A remarkable revolution now awaited the empire, which, from a slender beginning, effected a surprising change on the great theatre of human affairs. This was the rise of Mahomet and his *religion*. But here we fix the termination of ancient history, and the commencement of the modern. Previous, however, to our entering upon this second and most important part of our work, we shall consider, with some attention, the *manners, genius, laws, and policy of those Gothic nations* who subverted the Roman empire in the West, and, establishing themselves in every quarter of Europe, are justly considered, at this day, as the parent stock of most of the modern European nations.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### Genius and Character of the Gothic Nations.

THE ancient nations of Scandinavia have been compared to an immense tree, full of sap and vigour, which, while his root and stem were fostered in the hardy regions of the North, extended, by degrees, its wide branches over all Europe. To drop the language of metaphor, we know that the present European nations are, in fact, a mixed race, compounded of the *Scandinavians*, who, at different periods, invaded every quarter of this Western continent, and of the nations whom they subdued in their progress. As this is certainly the case, we have little room to doubt that the laws, manners, and customs of the modern nations of Europe are the result of this conjunction; and that, in so far as these are different from the civil and political usages which prevailed before this intermixture,

the difference is to be sought in the original manners and institutions of those Northern nations.

This consideration, as it has led to much research into the history and antiquities of the nations of Scandinavian origin, has opened up to us a variety of curious particulars, of equal importance to the historian and to the philosopher. It will, therefore, be an employment neither unpleasing nor unprofitable, if we attempt to give a view of the most interesting particulars of the history, manners, and usages of the Scandinavians, such as we have reason to believe them to have been before their intermixture with the nations of the South; and after thus endeavouring to obtain an acquaintance with the original character of this people, I shall consider the change which that character underwent when they became sovereigns of the greatest part of the Roman empire in Europe.

It is very evident that if we can attain at all to a knowledge of the character of this remarkable people antecedently to their intercourse with the southern kingdoms, it must be from the most ancient chronicles now existing among the present Scandinavian nations. For this source of information is infinitely more to be relied on than the accounts of Roman writers who, although well qualified to describe them after their migration and establishment in the South, had no knowledge of their character while in their original seats.

The most ancient Scandinavian Chronicles attribute to all the northern European nations an *Asiatic origin*. These Chronicles give strong grounds for conjecturing that the Goths of Scandinavia were a colony of Scythians, from the borders of the Black Sea and the Caspian; that this migration was performed about seventy years before the Christian era—though, according to some authors, not less than one thousand years before this period; and that the Cimbri, the inhabitants of the Chersonesus Cimbrica, or Denmark, were the descendants of the Cimmerian Scythians.

All the ancient writers of the North make mention of an invasion of Scandinavia, by a colony of Asiatics; of bloody wars on that account; and of the original inhabitants being expelled, or driven very far to the North, by these invaders. Odin, who afterward came to be regarded as the chief deity of the Scandinavians, was formerly the principal god of the Scythians who inhabited the country about Mount Taurus.

The Northern Chronicles say that a Scythian prince of the name of *Sigga*, who, according to the custom of his country, was chief-priest of the god, having raised a large band of followers, set out upon a warlike expedition to the northwest of the Black sea; that having subdued several of the Sarmatian or Russian tribes, he penetrated into the country of the Saxones, which he conquered, and divided among his children. The Icelandic Chronicles record the names of these children; and it is remarkable that, at this day, the sovereign princes of Westphalia, of East Saxony, and of Franconia, pretend to derive their origin from princes bearing these names.

Sigga afterward entered Scandinavia by the country of Holstein and of Jutland; and taking possession of the island of Funen, he built there the city of Odenzee, so called after the Scythian god, whose name he from that time assumed to himself, and dropping his name of Sigga, took that of Odin. Extending his conquests, he made himself master of all Denmark, of which he gave the sovereignty to his son Sciold, who, in the Icelandic Chronicle, stands the first of the princes who took the title of king of Denmark. The same Chronicle informs us that Sigga (now called Odin) continued his progress, and entering Sweden, was received by the inhabitants, and even by the prince, with divine honours; that, upon the death of this prince, the Swedes made him offer of the sovereignty; and that, penetrating from thence into Norway, he forced all the Scandinavian princes, one after another, to submit to his authority.



But Odin distinguished himself not only as a conqueror, but as a legislator and consummate politician. Under this character of divinity, while his immense conquests gave credit to his pretensions, he found the imposture highly advantageous in procuring an easy submission to all his laws and regulations. These, if we may believe the ancient chronicles, were extremely wise and salutary, and gave to those barbarous nations a species of civilization to which hitherto they had been entirely strangers. The historical evidence arising from these Scandinavian Chronicles, of an Eastern people migrating to the northwest, and spreading themselves over all the northern kingdoms, is much confirmed when we attend to the perfect coincidence that appears between the manners of the ancient Scandinavians, and those of the ancient Scythians.

The religion of the ancient Scandinavians forms a very curious object of inquiry, and is the more worthy of attention that it was most intimately connected with their manners. Three great moral principles were the foundation of their religion, and influenced their whole conduct. These were, "to serve the Supreme Being with prayer and sacrifice; to do no wrong or unjust actions; and to be valiant and intrepid in fight." These were the principles of the ancient religion, which, although accompanied by a most wild and extravagant mythology, yet resting on this pure and simple basis, had a wonderful effect upon the character and manners of the people. Keeping in view these principles, if we pursue the *Edda* or sacred book of the Scandinavians, we shall see amid all its absurdities the traces of a luminous and rational system of religion, which does no dishonour to the people who professed it.

Mallet, who, in his *Introduction to the History of Denmark*, has given an abridgment of this sacred book, has clearly shown, that although it contains the substance of a very ancient religion, it is not itself a

work of very high antiquity. The Edda, according to his account, was compiled by an Icelandic author a short time after the introduction of Christianity into that island, with the sole purpose of preserving the memory of the ancient poetry of the Scandinavians, which was inseparably connected with the ancient mythology. The compiler, who endeavoured to collect the best specimens of this ancient national poetry, was obliged, in order to render these intelligible, to explain that mythology on which they were founded, and thus, in fact, to unfold the whole doctrines of that ancient religion. Snorro Sturleson, the Icelandic writer who compiled the Edda as it is in its present form, lived in the beginning of the thirteenth century, and was supreme judge of Iceland. The work, besides the specimens of ancient poetry, consists of certain dialogues on the subject of mythology, which proceed on this fiction, that a king of Sweden named Gulphus, being at a loss to comprehend the origin of those notions of theology which prevailed in his country, and which tradition reported to have been originally derived from the Asiatics, undertook a journey in disguise to Asgard, a city of Asia, in order to be instructed in the genuine principles of that religion. He had several conversations with three princes, or rather priests, who answered all his questions, and fully explained to him the whole of the Celtic mythology. These dialogues compose the greatest part of the Edda; and from them it is easy to deduce a short account of the religion of the Scandinavians.

Odin, as we have before said, was their principal divinity; and it is very remarkable, that to him they attributed every character that could inspire fear and horror, without any mixture of the amiable or merciful. He is called in the Edda, the terrible and severe God, the father of carnage, the avenger, the deity who marks out those who are destined to be slain. This terrible God was held to be the Creator and Father of the Universe. The next in power to Odin, was Friga

or Frea, his wife. The God of heaven, says the Edda, united himself with the goddess of the earth; and from this conjunction sprang all the race of subordinate deities. This Frea, or the heavenly mother, came naturally to be considered as the goddess of love and of pleasure.

The third divinity in power and in authority was Thor, the son of Odin and of Frea, who was supposed to partake of the terrible attributes of his father, and was believed to be constantly occupied in warring against Loke, the father of treachery, and the rest of those giants and evil spirits who envied the power and meditated the destruction of Odin. The Edda enumerates likewise a great train of inferior deities, male and female, among the last of whom are the virgins of the Valhalla or Hall of Odin, whose office was to mark out those whom Odin destines to be slain in battle, and to minister to the deceased heroes in Paradise.

The creation of the world, as described in the Edda, is full of those wild and extravagant ideas which an ignorant and rude people must of necessity form, when left to their own conjectures on matters beyond the reach of human intellect.

I have observed that the religion of the Scandinavians had the greatest influence on their conduct and character. They were convinced that as this world was the work of some superior intelligences, so these presided continually over all nature, which they supposed to be of itself perfectly inanimate, and requiring *constantly* the interposition of deity to direct and regulate its motions. All the actions of men they believed therefore to proceed from this continual interposition of a deity, without whose aid they could no more move their limbs, or perform any vital function, than a stone could change its place. They therefore believed implicitly in fate or predestination, and in the absolute impossibility of a man's avoiding that course or destiny which was prescribed for him.

But while this was their firm persuasion, they allowed likewise the moral agency of man, and the possibility of his deserving rewards or punishments for his actions; a difficulty which more enlightened people have long laboured to reconcile. The favourites of Odin were all those who had died a violent death, either by the hand of an enemy, or, what was equally meritorious, by their own. These went directly after their death to Valhalla, or the palace of Odin. The wretch who had the pusillanimity to allow himself to be cut off by disease was unworthy of the favour of the gods, and was doomed to a state of punishment in the next world, and to the perpetual sufferance of anguish, remorse, and famine.

The way in which the departed heroes pass their time in Valhalla, or in the palace of Odin, is described in several places of the Edda. They have every day the pleasure of arming themselves, marshalling themselves in military order, engaging in battle, and being all cut to pieces; but when the stated hour of repast arrives, their bodies are reunited, and they return on horseback safe to the hall of banquet, where they feed heartily on the flesh of a boar, and drink beer out of the skulls of their enemies, till they are in a state of intoxication. Odin sits by himself at a particular table. The heroes are served by the beautiful virgins, named Valkirie, who officiate as their cup-bearers; but the pleasures of love do not enter at all into the joys of this extraordinary Paradise.

These notions of religious belief among the Scandinavians, arising from a native ferocity of character, had a strong effect on their national manners and on the conduct of individuals. Placing their sole delight in war, and in the slaughter of their enemies, they had an absolute contempt of danger and of bodily pain. It was not enough that they exposed themselves without fear to the greatest perils—they courted death with avidity. Several most remarkable instances of this intrepidity of character we find in the Icelandic

Chronicle. Harald with the blue teeth, king of Denmark, who lived about the middle of the tenth century, founded on the coast of Pomerania a city which he named Julin or Jomsburg. He had sent thither a colony of young Danes, under the command of a famous leader named Palnatoko. This man's ambition was to form a nation of heroes. All his institutions tended to instil into his subjects the contempt of life. It was disgraceful for a citizen of Jomsburg to hesitate to engage in an enterprise where the event was inevitably fatal: on the other hand, it was glorious to seek for every opportunity of encountering death.

The Chronicle of Iceland records some instances of this savage heroism which almost exceed belief. In an irruption made by the Jomsburgers into the territories of Haquin, a Norwegian chief, the invaders were defeated, and a few had the misfortune to escape death in the field, and to be taken in arms. They were condemned to be beheaded, and this intelligence was received by them with every demonstration of joy. When the spectators of their fate expressed their astonishment at this conduct, "Why should you wonder," said one, "that I should rejoice to follow where my father is gone before?" Another thus addressed his executioner: "I suffer death," said he, "with the highest pleasure: I only request that you will cut off my head as quickly as possible. We have often disputed," said he, "at Jomsburg, whether life remained for any time after the head was cut off: now I shall decide the question. If any life remains, I shall aim a blow at you with this knife which I hold in my hand. Despatch," said he, "but don't abuse my hair, for it is very beautiful." Whether these instances are real or fabulous, even the fabrication of such facts by a very ancient author shows that they were consentaneous to the spirit of his country: but, in truth, the manners of other savage tribes who are in a similar state of society, furnish proofs even at this day that



such a character as that of the Jomsburgers is not out of nature.

Among these nations, this characteristic of an absolute contempt of death was not peculiar to the Jomsburgers. It was common to all the branches of that great parent stock. The poet Lucan has taken notice of this singular feature, and assigns its true cause—the belief of a future state, where rewards were to be bestowed solely on the brave.\* To avoid the disgrace of dying a natural death, and thus forfeiting the joys of paradise, the ferocious Scandinavian had often recourse to self-destruction. An Icelandic author mentions a rock in Sweden from which the old men frequently precipitated themselves into the sea, in order that they might go directly to the hall of Odin.

In the paradise of the Valhalla, the heroes ranked around the table according to the degree of favour they had obtained in the sight of Odin, from the slaughter they had committed on earth. He who had killed, with his own hand, the greatest number of enemies, was seated in the highest place: the heavenly virgins paid him peculiar attention, and most frequently presented to him the enlivening draught from the human scull into which they poured it.

That fine remnant of ancient poetry, which is entitled the Death-song of King Regner Lodbrog, affords full confirmation of all we have said on this ferocity

\* “——— Certe populi quos despicit Arctos  
 Felices errore suo ! quos ille timorum  
 Maximus haud urget lethi metus ; inde ruendi  
 In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces  
 Mortis, et ignavum est redituræ parcere vitæ.”

“Surely the nations on whom the Northern Bear looks down are happy in their error ! whom the fear of death, the greatest of all terrors, scarcely moves ; therefore with headlong fury, and minds filled with slaughter, they rush upon the sword, reckless of life.”

Q\*

of character of the Scandinavians. This prince, who was king of Denmark, flourished about the end of the eighth, or beginning of the ninth century. After a life of military glory, he was at last made prisoner by Ælla, a Northumbrian prince, and condemned to die by the poison of vipers. Lodbrog died with the usual intrepidity of his countrymen. He drowned the acute feelings of his sufferings by singing this chronicle of his exploits, while his attendants, who stood around him, joined at stated intervals in a sort of chorus, "We hewed with our swords." In this death-song, Lodbrog seems to derive the highest pleasure from recounting all the acts of slaughter and carnage that he had committed in his lifetime. These were his only consolation; they were, in his idea, a certain passport to the joys of paradise, and insured for him a distinguished place at the banquet of Odin. After enumerating a series of heroic deeds, but all of a most atrocious and sanguinary nature, he thus concludes: "What is more beautiful than to see the heroes pushing on through the battle, though fainting with their wounds! What boots it that the timid youth flies from the combat? he shall not escape from misery—who can avoid the fate which is ordained for him? I did not dream that I should have fallen a sacrifice to Ælla, whose shores I have covered with the heaps of slain. But there is a never-failing consolation for my spirit—the table of Odin is prepared for the brave. There the hero shall know no grief. There we shall quaff the amber liquor from the capacious skulls. I will not tremble when I approach the hall of the god of death. Now the serpents gnaw my vitals; but it is a cordial to my soul that my enemy shall quickly follow me, for my sons will revenge my death. War was my delight from my youth, and from my childhood I was pleased with the bloody spear. No sigh shall disgrace my last moments. The immortals will not disdain to admit me into their presence. Here let me end my song; the heavenly virgins sum-

mon me away ; the hours of my life are at an end ; I exult and smile at death !”

We have given some idea of the religious belief among these nations. It is proper that we should say something of their mode of worship.

Tacitus, in speaking of the religious worship of the ancient Germans, remarks that they had neither temples nor idols ; that they thought it impious to suppose that the Divinity could be contained within the walls of a building raised by man ; and that it was degrading to the dignity of the Supreme Being to represent him in the human figure.\* Such, likewise, were originally the notions of all the Celtic tribes. The open air was the temple of the Divinity ; and a forest, or grove of oaks whose venerable gloom was suited to the solemnity of the occasion, was the place where it was usual to worship by prayer and sacrifice. The altar was composed of one immense stone, or of three placed together, forming a base for one of a larger size laid at top, to serve as a table. A single, a double, and sometimes a triple row of stones, fixed in the ground in a circular form, surrounded the altar. Of these, which are called *Druidical* circles, there are vast numbers to be found through all the northern kingdoms of Europe, and nowhere more frequently than in Britain.† The most remarkable monument

\* “Cæterum nec cohibere parietibus Deos, neque in ullam humani oris speciem assimilare, ex magnitudine cœlestium arbitrantur.”

“The immensity of the universe should teach us that the gods are neither to be confined within walls, or assimilated to the human form.”

† There are two of these monuments, of a very large size, near Stromness, in the Orkney Islands, one of a semicircular form of thirty-two feet radius, consisting of seven stones, from fourteen to eighteen feet in height, and the other a circle of three hundred and thirty-six feet diameter, consisting of sixteen stones, from nine to fourteen feet in height. Round this ditch, at unequal distances from each other, are eight small artificial eminences. The altar stood without the circle, to

of this kind at present existing is that prodigious circle upon Salisbury Plain, which is known by the name of Stonehenge.\* In the northern counties of Scotland, we everywhere meet with smaller circles of the same kind, which there seems no reason to doubt were devoted to religious purposes. In these groves, and upon these altars, the Druids offered sacrifices of various kinds, the most acceptable of which were human victims. This was not to be wondered at, considering that it was their opinion, that the supreme Deity placed his chief delight in blood and slaughter. With these barbarous peoples the number nine was supposed to have something in it of peculiar sanctity. Every ninth month there was a sacrifice offered up to the gods of nine human victims: and in the first month of every ninth year was held an extraordinary solemnity, which was marked with dreadful slaughter. Dithmar, an historian of the eleventh century, has the following passage: "There is," says he, "in Zeeland, a place named Lederun, where every ninth year, in the month of January, the Danes assemble in great multitudes; and upon that occasion they sacrifice ninety-nine men, and the same number of horses,

the southeast. At some distance from the semicircle there is a stone eight feet high, with a round hole or perforation in it; and it is customary at this day, among the country people, when a solemn promise is made (for example, of marriage) for the contracting parties to join their hands through this hole. This is called the promise of Odin, and is held to be particularly inviolable.—*Memoirs of the Soc. of Scott. Antig.* vol. i. p. 263.

\* Stonehenge consists of two concentric circles, of which the outer is one hundred and eighty feet in diameter. The upright stones of which these circles are composed, are placed at the distance of three and a half feet from each other, and joined two and two at the top by stones laid across, with tenons fitted to the mortises in the uprights, for keeping the transverse stones in their place. The size of these stones is various, from four to seven yards in height, and generally of the breadth of two yards, and thickness of one. The walk between the circles is three hundred feet in circumference.

dogs, and cocks, in the firm assurance of thus obtaining the favour and protection of their gods."

The victims, upon those occasions, were commonly captives taken in war; and such were the honours paid to them, and the flattering prospects set before them by the Druids, of the great rewards awaiting them in a future state, that these deluded creatures went exulting to the altar, esteeming it the highest honour to be thus peculiarly set apart for the service of the great *Odin*. Lucan, in the third book of his 'Pharsalia,' has a very fine passage, in which he has touched several of the most striking peculiarities of the Druidical superstition, a passage in which there is a wonderful assemblage of those circumstances which strike the mind with horror.

"There is," says he, "without the walls of Marseilles a sacred grove, which had never been touched by axe since the creation. The trees of it grew so thick, and were so interwoven, that they suffered not the rays of the sun to pierce through their branches; but a dreary damp and perfect darkness reigned through the place. Neither nymphs nor sylvan gods could inhabit this recess, it being destined for the most inhuman mysteries. There was nothing to be seen there but a multitude of altars, upon which they sacrificed human victims, whose blood died the trees with horrid crimson. If ancient tradition may be credited, no bird ever perched upon their boughs, no beast ever trod under them, no wind ever blew through them, nor thunderbolt did ever touch them. These tall oaks, as well as the black water that winds in different channels through the place, fill the mind with dread and horror. The figures of the god of the grove are a kind of rude and shapeless trunks, covered over with a dismal yellow moss. It is the genius of the Gauls," continues he, "thus to reverence gods of whom they know not the figure; and their ignorance of the *object of their worship* increases their veneration."



tion.\* There is a report that this grove is often shaken and strangely agitated; and that dreadful sounds are heard from its deep recesses; that the trees, if destroyed or thrown down, arise again of themselves; that the forest is sometimes seen to be on fire, without being consumed, and that the oaks are twined about with monstrous serpents. The Gauls dare not live in it, from the awe of the divinity that inhabits it, and to whom they entirely abandon it. Only at noon and at midnight a priest goes trembling into it, to celebrate its dreadful mysteries; and is in continual fear lest the deity to whom it is consecrated should appear to him."

From this description, we may perceive with what artful policy the Druids had heightened the sanctity of their own character, by concealing the mysteries of their worship, and pervading the minds of the people with the deepest awe and reverence for everything that regarded that religion of which they were the guardians. No vulgar step durst enter the sacred grove, and the priest himself feigned to approach it with fear and trembling. It was by these arts that the Druids, as all historians agree, had an influence and ascendancy over the minds of the people, far exceeding that of the priests under any other system of Pagan worship. Armed with this influence, they did not confine themselves to the duties of the priesthood, but exercised, in fact, many of the most important offices of the civil magistrate.† And so very powerful

\* Similar to this is the fine expression of Tacitus, in describing the secret worship of the goddess Hertha, or Earth, by the Angles and some other of the Germanic nations: "Arcanus hinc terror, sanctaque ignorantia, quid sit Illud quod tantum perituri vident."—*Tacit. de Mor. Germ.* cap. 40.

"Hence their silent terror, and devout ignorance, especially when about to die."

† This Tacitus plainly informs us of: "Cæterum neque animadvertere neque vincere, neque verberare quidem, nisi sacerdotibus permissum, non quasi in pœnam nec ducis jussu, sed velut Deo imperante."

"They neither strike, nor overcome another, nor inflict

was the hold which this order of men had upon the minds of the people, that it became a necessary policy with the Romans to depart in this instance from their accustomed spirit of toleration; since they found it impossible to preserve their conquests over any of the nations of Celtic origin, till they had utterly exterminated the Druids, and abolished every vestige of that potent superstition. This was the policy of the Romans in Gaul, as well as in Britain; and in those provinces it was successful. But, in the meantime, the Hydra wounded in one quarter was daily increasing in the strength and vigour of its principal members. And the primitive tribes of Scandinavia amply revenged the injuries of their brethren of Gaul and of Britain.

Thus, from the preceding review of the principal features which composed the character of the ancient nations from whose blood we are sprung, it may be inferred, that nature, education, and prevailing habits, all concurred to form them for an intrepid and conquering people. Their bodily frame invigorated by the climate in which they inhabited—inured from infancy to dangers and to difficulties—war their constant occupation—believing in a fixed and inevitable destiny—and taught by their religion that an heroic sacrifice of life was a certain assurance of the enjoyment of eternal happiness;—how could a race of men, under these circumstances, fail to be the conquerors of the world?

In this short dissertation on the manners of the North, I have endeavoured to give some idea of the original character and genius of those branches of that great family which were destined to overrun and subdue the fairest regions of Europe. It remains now to exhibit this people in a different point of view, and to mark the character which they assumed in

chastisement, unless permitted by their priests; not indeed, as though the fear of punishment, or obeying the command of a superior, but as its being the will of God."

their new establishments. Vulgar prejudice has long annexed the idea of barbarian to the name of Goth, and it has been rashly and erroneously imagined, that the same rudeness and ferocity of manners which it is acknowledged distinguished these northern heroes in their native seats, attended their successors while settled in the polished provinces of the Roman empire. We shall see them, on the contrary, when sovereigns of imperial Rome, superior in many respects to their immediate predecessors, and aspiring at a character of refinement, moderation, and humanity, which would have done no dishonour to the better times and more fortunate periods of that declining state.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### Character of the Gothic Nations after the Conquest of Italy.

IT has been usual to consider the Gothic nations as a savage and barbarous race, pouring down from the inclement and uncultivated regions of the north, marking their course with bloodshed and devastation, and, like hungry wolves, falling upon the provinces of the empire, and involving all in undistinguished ruin. It is certainly not surprising that the name of Goth should to the ears of the moderns convey the idea of ferocity and barbarism, when we find popular writers, and those even of no limited degree of information, promoting this false and erroneous opinion, by holding forth a few instances of brutality and ignorance among some of the princes of the Gothic nations, as characteristic of the manners and genius of the whole. Voltaire, in his *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations* (chap. xvii.) after recapitulating some examples of the cruelty of Clovis and his successors in the mon-

archy of the Franks (and among the rest, the monstrous fiction of the atrocious murders said to be committed by Queen Brunehilda,) concludes with this observation, that besides the foundation of some religious houses, there is no trace remaining of those frightful ages but a confused tradition of misery and devastation :—"Il ne reste de monumens de ces âges affreux que des fondations de monasteres et un confus souvenir de misère et de brigandage. Figurez-vous des déserts, où les loups, les tigres, et les renards égorgent un bétail épars et timide ; c'est le portrait de l'Europe pendant tant de siècles." That this portrait of Europe, as M. Voltaire terms it, was a very false and exaggerated one, we shall now proceed to show.

What were the manners of those Gothic nations before they left their seats in the north, we have already seen, and must acknowledge that, at this period, their character, if not marked by absolute barbarism, was at least distinguished by a most sanguinary and ferocious spirit. This, however, is not absolutely inconsistent with a species of humanity, and is frequently allied to great generosity of mind. Though bloody and implacable in war, they were not strangers to the virtues of peace ;—hospitality and kindness to strangers, which are the common virtues of rude nations, they possessed in a high degree. The respect, likewise, which the Scandinavians entertained for the female sex was a striking feature in their character, and could not fail, in many respects, to humanise their dispositions.

The Goths, in their progress southward, subduing nations more refined than themselves, would naturally make proportional advances in civilization ; and therefore it is not surprising that, by the time they had attained a footing in the empire, we find them in many respects a humane, and even a cultivated and enlightened people. Before their settlement in the Roman provinces, they had laid aside their idolatrous superstitions for the Christian religion. To their notions

of morality, we have the most honourable testimonies from various authors. Grotius, in his preface to his publication of Procopius and Jornandes, has collected many of these testimonies. Salvianus, the Bishop of Marseilles, who lived about the middle of the fifth century, has drawn a parallel between the manners of the Romans and those nations whom they still affected to term barbarous—which is as much to the honour of the latter, as it is to the disgrace of the former. “*Omnes fere barbari,*” says he, “*qui modo sunt unius gentis ac regis se mutuò amant ; omnes pæne Romani se mutuò persequuntur. Vastantur pauperes, viduæ gemunt, orphani proculcantur ; in tantum, ut multi eorum et non obscuris natalibus editi et liberaliter instituti, ad hostes fugiant—quærentes scilicet apud barbaros Romanam humanitatem, quia apud Romanos barbaram immanitatem ferre non possunt.*”\*

From this honourable character as a nation, from their integrity, love of justice, and good faith, “we may remark,” says Grotius, “that in the whole course of those wars carried on in Italy under the generals of Justinian, no province or district ever voluntarily departed from their allegiance to the Gothic government.” In fact, it is not possible to produce a more beautiful picture of an excellent administration than that of the Gothic monarchy under Theodoric the Great, in Italy. Of this the letters of Cassiodorus, his secretary, a man of eminent learning and abilities, give a very complete idea. We find in these the political constitutions of a prince who seems to have continually employed his thoughts on what might equally aggrandize his empire and promote the hap-

\* “The barbarians, if of the same nation and under the same sovereign, entertain for each other the most kindly feelings of regard. The Romans as universally persecute each other : so much so, that many of them, and these of no low degree, fly for protection to the enemy ; exposed to barbarian cruelty among the Romans, they seek Roman hospitality from the barbarians.”



pineness of his subjects. It is a high pleasure to set in a conspicuous light the almost forgotten merits of one of the most illustrious characters that ever adorned the annals of history; I shall therefore, while on this subject of the genius and character of the Gothic nations, throw together some particulars descriptive of the excellent administration of this truly great and excellent monarch.\*

In a former chapter we have seen Theodoric derive his right to the kingdom of Italy from the gift of the emperor Zeno, after he had subdued the country. He was received by the Romans with a submission due to a conqueror, which his humane policy soon changed into the affection due to a native prince. Where laws and customs were good, he attempted no innovations; he retained the Roman laws, the Roman magistrates, the same internal police, and the same distribution of the provinces. The Goths, as conquerors, were naturally entitled to the chief military honours and commands; but the Romans alone were preferred to all civil employments. He seems from the first to have adopted the spirit of a Roman, in the most enthusiastic regard for every remain of the ancient grandeur of the empire. Instead of that savage spirit which pleases itself often in effacing those remnants of antiquity, which are too strong a contrast to modern barbarism, it was the regret of Theodoric to find such noble works in ruins—his highest pleasure to preserve and to imitate them.\*

\* A very curious picture of the ordinary mode of life of Theodoric is contained in an epistle of Sidonius Apollinaris (l. i., ep: 2.,) of which Mr. Gibbon, in the thirty-sixth chapter of his History, has given an elegant translation.

\* *Acerbum nimis est (Theod. loq.) nostrum temporibus antiquorum facta decrescere qui ornatum urbium quotidie desideramus augere.—Cass. Var. Q. 35.*

“It is too vexatious that the works of ancient art should be suffered to diminish, when it is our desire to add daily to the embellishment of our cities.”

As Theodoric made no alteration in the laws, superior magistrates, or forms of government, so he contented himself with the same tributes and taxes which had been levied by the emperors. These, however, he collected in the manner the least possibly oppressive; and he was ever ready to abate, and even remit them entirely, on occasions of public scarcity or calamity. Of this humane indulgence, we have many beautiful instances. He remitted to the inhabitants of Campania the taxes of a year, in consideration of what they had suffered from an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. In his letter on that occasion to the governor of Campania, he tells him that the inhabitants of the province had petitioned him for relief; that to grant their request he wished only to be rightly informed of the extent of their sufferings; he required him, therefore, to send some person of character and integrity into the territory of Nola and Naples to view the lands, that he might proportion his relief to their misfortunes. The citizens of Naples, in gratitude for their sovereign's benevolence, erected in the forum his statue, in Mosaic work—a specimen of art which attracted the admiration of all Italy. In the same humane and liberal spirit he exempted the inhabitants of Lipontum, in Apulia, from all taxes for the space of two years, in consideration of their lands being laid waste by the Vandals, in a descent from the coast of Africa. It was a maxim of his which he often exemplified: “*Sola virtus est misericordia, cui omnes virtutes cedere honorabiliter non recusant.*” “Mercy is the only virtue to which all the other virtues may honourably yield.” (Cass. Var. Q. 9.) A most beautiful instance of his clemency—nay, something beyond it—is preserved in one of his letters to the Roman senate. Liberius had been an active minister under Odoacer, whom Theodoric had stripped of the kingdom of Italy. Theodoric acquainted the senate, by letter, that he had bestowed rewards and honours on Liberius and on his son, for the very

reason that *he* had meritoriously and faithfully served Odoacer, though his enemy ; that to him, whom fortune had now made his sovereign, he had not fled as a base refugee, nor courted his favour by vilifying his former master.\*

One of the first actions which signalized the reign of this illustrious prince is an example equally of the most judicious policy and of singular humanity. In the reign of Odoacer, in a predatory expedition of the Burgundians, under Gondebald, into Italy, the whole province of Liguria was desolated, and a great number of the inhabitants carried into captivity. Theodoric undertook to repair this misfortune ; he sent Epiphanius, a bishop of great eloquence as well as sanctity of character, to Lyons, which was the court of Gondebald, with an offer of ransom from Theodoric for all the Ligurian captives. The Burgundian prince, won by the eloquence of the prelate, to emulate the generosity of his brother sovereign, gratuitously discharged all who had not been taken in arms, and required for the rest a very moderate ransom. The return of these captives, to the amount of many thousands, in Italy, exhibited a spectacle which drew tears from the eyes of all the beholders, and contrib-

\* "Et ideo," says he, "sic factum est ut ei libenter daremus præmium quia nostrum fideliter juvabat inimicum." In another of the letters of Theodoric to the senate he has these fine expressions: "Benigni principis est non tam delicta velle punire quam tollere, ne aut acriter vindicando, æstimetur nimis, aut leviter agendo putetur improvidus. At vos quos semper gravitas decet, nolite truculenter insequi inania verba populi. Quid enim discrepit a peccante, qui se per excessum nititur vindicare?"

"It is a benevolent principle rather to remove or prevent offences than to punish them: nor is either the rigorous enforcing of punishment to be too much approved, or its light infliction too much condemned. And you, whom dignity always becomes, should not notice, in too severe a manner the idle words of the people ; for wherein does he differ from the offender, who seeks to avenge himself by excessive severity."

uted equally (as Muratori remarks) to the glory of religion, and to the honour of that humane prince by whose means so unexpected a blessing was derived to his subjects. The religion of Theodoric (as that of all the Gothic nations after their conversion from idolatry) was Arianism, or that system which professes the Unity of the Godhead, and holds the Son only to be the first and most excellent of created beings, whom God has chosen to be his instrument in the redemption of mankind: a doctrine which is commonly supposed to have been first openly professed and vindicated by Arius, a presbyter of Alexander, in the fourth century. It was, however, condemned by the council of Nice, summoned by Constantine the Great; and as the Gothic nations paid no regard to this ecclesiastical decree, but adhered to those opinions which their own bishops had taught them, they were treated by the Catholics as little better than heathens. Even the excellent Theodoric has been loaded with calumnies by some of the most bigoted fathers of the church, while those of a more truly Christian spirit have done ample justice to his merits. Partial as he was to the tenets of Arius, yet, after his establishment in Italy, he attempted no reformation of the prevailing religion of the country. The Catholics were not only unmolested in the exercise of their religion, but, by the excellent ecclesiastical regulations for the maintenance of peace and good order, and by the care shown in the appointment of prelates of known probity of character, it is acknowledged by the Catholics themselves, that at no period did the church enjoy greater harmony or prosperity. The humane toleration of Theodoric extended not only to different sects of Christians, but even to those who, as inveterate enemies of the Christian faith, are generally regarded with a degree of abhorrence. The synagogue of the Jews at Genoa had fallen to ruin; Theodoric allowed them to rebuild it. "Religionem," says he, "imperare non possumus; quia nemo cogitur ut credat invitus."

“We can have no authority or command over religion for the reason that no man is able to conform either his thoughts or his belief to another’s bidding.” This truly laudable spirit of toleration was common, as Grotius remarks, to all the Gothic nations.

Such was the character of Theodoric the Great, a prince whom it is certainly no exaggeration to term, in the words of Sidonius Apollinaris, “*Romanæ decus columenque gentis.*”—“The ornament and pillar of the Roman state.” It may, perhaps, be remarked, that one extraordinary example of this kind, which might have arisen in any age or nation, is not sufficient to warrant any general inference with regard to the manners of a whole people; and had this example been singular in the annals of the Gothic nations in Europe, we must have admitted the force of the objection. It was not, however, singular, as may be proved by the example of many of the Gothic princes, whose characters, if not attaining on all points to the striking eminence of Theodoric, were yet such as justly entitle them to the admiration and respect of posterity. I shall instance Alaric, Amalasonta, the daughter of Theodoric, and Totila. We have seen, in the course of our historical detail, the progress of the conquests of Alaric upon the Western empire, and the perfidious conduct of Honorius, who, under the direction of his ministers Stilicho and Olympius, compelled the generous Goth to extremities. In revenge of their repeated acts of treachery and perjury, wearied out at length, and highly exasperated by their perfidy, Alaric revenged himself by the sack of Rome, which he had twice before spared on the faith of a treaty which Honorius had violated. Yet such was the humanity of this barbarian captain, that he gave the most express orders for restraining all effusion of blood, unless in case of obstinate resistance. He particularly enjoined that the churches should be held as an inviolable asylum for all who fled thither for shelter, and that the treasures and jewels which



they contained (strong temptations to armed troops in the tumult of victory !) should not be touched under the severest penalties. His orders were religiously obeyed ; and so remarkable was the moderation and singular clemency of this Gothic and heretic conqueror, that the Catholic fathers themselves have transmitted to posterity the most honourable testimonies of his virtues.

Amalasonta, the daughter of Theodoric, governed Italy during the minority of her son Athalaric. Such was the political wisdom, the equity and lenity of her administration, that the loss of Theodoric, beloved, or rather adored, as he was by his subjects, was scarcely felt. By the counsels, and under the direction of his excellent minister, Cassiodorus, she pursued the same plan of government, directing, at the same time, her utmost attention to the proper education of her son, whom she wished to train up in every great and useful accomplishment. The passion of this princess for the cultivation of literature was so strong, as to draw upon her the reproach of some of the more illiterate of her subjects, who blamed her, in the education of her son, for bestowing more attention on the study of letters than on martial and athletic exercises. But she rightly conceived that the ferocious spirit of the times required rather to be softened than fostered and encouraged.

We have seen the conduct of Totila when, like Alaric, twice master of Rome (which he won by force of arms, after an obstinate resistance), he imitated the conduct of that conqueror, not only in his clemency to the vanquished, and in his care to preserve the city from destruction, but even in rebuilding with the utmost magnificence, what, in the fury of a siege, it had proved impossible to preserve from violence. On his first taking possession of the city, he assembled the senate, and, with great eloquence, recapitulating the favours they had received from the Gothic sovereigns, Theodoric and Amalasonta, and contrasting

their mild and equitable administration, with the severities they had experienced under the emperors and their officers, he bitterly reproached them with their base servility as well as ingratitude to their benefactors. Being now, however, master of Italy, the Romans experienced under his government every happiness which a nation can derive from the virtues of a prince. "*Habitavit cum Romanis*," says Paulus Diaconus, a contemporary author, "*tanquam pater cum filiis*."—"He dwelt among the Romans as a father among his children." He restored the senate to rank and splendour. He adorned the city with many costly structures, made the most salutary regulations for its being constantly supplied with provisions, regulated the rates at which they were to be sold, and gratified the Romans by restoring the ancient Circensian games, which he exhibited with a magnificence rivalling that of the most illustrious of the emperors: in fine, he made the Gothic government as respectable as it had been under Theodoric; so that with truth it might be said of the administration of those princes, that they made good the promise of that great man upon his accession to the throne of Italy:—"that the only regret of the people would be not to have come at an earlier period under the sway of the Goths."

The stream of Gothic inundation, in its first irruption upon the provinces of the empire, had divided itself into two great branches upon the death of Hermaneric. One branch of the nation, remaining in Pannonia, and choosing for themselves a chief or king, were termed Ostrogoths, in opposition to the other branch, which, choosing a different sovereign, separated themselves and migrated to the westward, whence they were termed Westrogoths or Visigoths. These last, under Alaric, after some successful inroads upon the exterior provinces, we have seen, penetrated into Italy, and carrying everything before them, were for some time masters of the capital of the Western

empire. Upon the death of Alaric, Italy was for a while free from the dominion of the Goths, till the period when Theodoric the Ostrogoth acquired a gift of the sovereignty from Zeno, in reward of his delivering that kingdom from the usurpation of Odoacer and the Heruli. The Western or Visigoths, in the meantime, after the death of Alaric, had withdrawn into Gaul. Honorius assigned to them the province of Aquitaine, and their prince Ataulphus fixed his residence at Thoulouse, which continued for some time to be the capital of the empire of the Visigoths, till Clovis and his Franks, from zeal to the Catholic religion and detestation of the heretical opinions of these Arians, drove them out of Gaul: when they took their way across the Pyrenees, and, settling in Spain, made Toledo the capital of their kingdom. The race of the Visigoth princes in Spain was termed the race of the *Balti*, as that of the Ostrogoths was the *Amali*—ancient names of the chiefs, or heads of the two distinct families, from which these sovereigns were descended. It was remarkable that the Ostrogoth princes of the race of the Amali—for instance, Theodoric, Amalasonta, and Totila—had a predilection for the laws of the Romans, and enforced the universal observance of them in their dominions; while the Visigoth princes, of the race of the Balti almost all of them rejected the Roman jurisprudence, and adhered to a code of their own, formed from the ancient laws and customs of the Gothic nations. The reason, I apprehend, was this. The Ostrogoth princes, taking possession of Italy, not as invaders, but rather as recovering it from the usurpation of the Heruli, and holding it as a gift from the lawful proprietors, the emperors of the East, were received by the Italians as friends, protectors, and lawful sovereigns. They found there an excellent system of laws, and a people living under them disposed to every duty of allegiance. To have changed these laws would have been the height of imprudence. The Visigoths, on the contrary, wherever they came, were

invaders. They had often laid waste the provinces of the empire, and particularly Italy, by their incursions; they were regarded as enemies by the Romans, and both nations looked upon each other with an eye of jealousy. It would therefore have been extremely unnatural in them to have adopted the laws of a people with whom they were constantly at variance; they therefore kept to their own laws and ancient usages, which, as soon as they had obtained a fixed residence, it was the care of their sovereigns to compile and digest into a regular code. It is therefore from this collection of the laws of the Visigoths that we may naturally expect to derive the most certain information that we can now attain of the genius and spirit of this ancient people. In the preface to these laws of the Visigoths, we are informed that they were first begun to be digested into a code by King Evaricus or Euric, who reigned about the year 470 of the Christian era. They were corrected and augmented by Leovigildus, who died in 586, and enlarged likewise by some succeeding monarchs, the last of whom was Ervigius, who died in 687. Thus, the first formation of this code of the laws of the Visigoths was prior, by fifty years, to the date of the compilation of the pandects or digests of the Roman laws made by the command of Justinian, who it is not improbable, adopted from this code of the barbarians the idea of collecting the substance of that immense mass of the Roman laws into one body, which we are informed, before his time, lay scattered in two thousand volumes.

The learned and ingenious author of the History of Charles the Fifth has, in his preliminary discourse, in treating of the pernicious consequences of the feudal system, certainly greatly overcharged the picture, when he represents the state of the Gothic governments to be a scene of tumult and dissension, where there was no common or connecting interest to promote a tranquil and regular administration. That this was not the case, these Gothic laws afford the fullest

proof; for, it is impossible that such laws should have been the fruit of dissension, or of an impotent administration. That historian indeed tells us that these laws fell soon into disuse, and that customs vague and capricious were substituted in their place. But that this was not the case among the Visigoths, at least till the Saracen invasion of Spain, I believe is incontrovertible; and that they never were in oblivion is evident from this fact, that the *Forum Judicum* or *Fuero Juzgo*, which is acknowledged to be the fountain of the Spanish law, is in reality, at this day, in great part composed of these ancient laws of the Visigoths. From this code (of the *Leges Visigothorum*,) which is extremely worthy of the perusal both of the lawyer and the student of history, I shall make a short abstract of a few of the statutes, which will fully evince what the reader may already be disposed to believe, that these nations, at the period of which we now treat, were in a state of society very remote from barbarism; perhaps even further advanced in civilization and refinement than any contemporary people of the west of Europe.

In order that all judges might have a certain fixed and immutable rule, ascertaining the extent of their jurisdiction, it is declared by these laws, that no judge shall presume to decide in any lawsuit unless he finds in this book a statute precisely applicable to it. Such causes as fell not under any of these statutes are declared to be reserved for the jurisdiction of the prince. Lib. li., tit. i., l. xii.

Although there seems to reign in many of the penal laws of the Visigoths, a considerable degree of severity, it is tempered at the same time with great equity. One excellent law, which was applicable to all prosecutions for crimes, was that which limited the punishment of all offences to the offender himself, without affecting his children or heirs. While the Roman emperors were enacting such sanguinary statutes, as that of Arcadius and Honorius, which declares that



the children of those convicted of treason shall be perpetually infamous, incapable of all inheritance, of all office or employment; that they shall languish in want and misery, "so that life shall be to them a burden, and death a comfort"—while such was the spirit of the laws of the enlightened Romans, let us remark the complexion of those of the barbarian Goths: "*Omnia crimina suos sequantur auctores. Nec pater pro filio, nec filius pro patre, nec uxor pro marito, nec maritus pro uxore, nec frater pro fratre, nec vicinus pro vicino, nec propinquus pro propinquo, ullam calamitatem pertimescat. Sed ille solus judicetur culpabilis qui culpanda commiserit, et crimen cum illo qui fecerit moriatur: nec successores aut hæredes, pro factis parentum, ullum periculum pertimescant.*" (Lib. vi., tit. i., l. viii.)\* It were to the honour of us moderns, that the penal laws of the most civilized nations in Europe were dictated in the same spirit of humanity.

The laws against murder were uncommonly rigid. If the friends of the deceased neglected to prosecute for the crime, any other person whatever might bring the murderer to justice. (Lib. vi., t. i., l. xv.) If a man, by pure accident, should put another to death, he was guilty of no crime; yet, if intending but the smallest injury to another, such as a blow with the hand or foot, he should accidentally put him to death, he was guilty of homicide. (Lib. vi. *ibid.*) If a man, aiming a blow at one person, should kill another; if the murderer began the quarrel, he was punished with death. If it was begun by the person at whom the blow was aimed, that person paid a heavy fine to the relations of the deceased—one hundred solidi of gold—and the murderer half the sum. (*Ibid.* l. iv.) It was death to give a woman drugs to procure abortion, and

\* "Let all crimes be visited on the perpetrator alone. Let no father for a son, nor son for a father, no husband for a wife, or wife for a husband, &c., dread any responsibility. Let the crime die with him who has committed it, and let not the heir dread any danger from the deeds of his predecessor."

equally criminal if that effect should follow from a stroke or any wilful injury. Child-murder was punished with the death of the parent. (Lib. vi., tit. iii.) If a master, even upon the highest provocation, should put his slave to death, he was fined in a pound of gold, became perpetually infamous, and was deprived of the power of making a testament. (Lib. vi., t. v., l. xii.) If a master maimed his servant of a hand, foot, ear, nose, lip, or eye, he was condemned to three years banishment from the province in which he resided. (Lib. vi., t. v., l. xiii.) The *lex talionis* (the law of a tooth for a tooth, or the requital of an injury in the same kind) was in great observance among the Gothic nations. The Visigoth code provides, that for every offence for which there is not a special statutory punishment, the *pœna talionis* should take place. It was a very ample extension of this retaliation, that he who wilfully set fire to a house was burnt himself. If a judge, corrupted by bribery, condemned an innocent man to punishment, he suffered the like punishment himself.

It is remarkable that we find in those laws of the Visigoths no traces of those singular and barbarous modes of trial, which were in use among most of the other Gothic nations, even at a period posterior, by several ages, to the code of which we now treat. I mean what was termed the judgment of God—the trial of crimes by judicial combat between the accuser and accused, and the ordeal or trial by fire and water. These customs, we know, continued long to prevail among the Franks and Normans; but there is no evidence that they were ever in use either among the Visigoths or Ostrogoths; I therefore omit any further mention of them in this place, but shall take particular notice of them in treating afterward of the European manners in the age of Charlemagne. It is asserted by Montesquieu, in his *Spirit of Laws*, b. xxviii., l. ii., that the distinguishing character of these laws of the barbarous nations was, that they were not con-

fined to a certain district; but that in every Gothic nation it was usual to apply that law which was peculiar to the country of the litigants. The Frank," says he, "was tried by the law of the Franks; the Aleman by the law of the Alemans; the Burgundian by that of the Burgundians; the Roman by the Roman law; and he seeks for some ingenious reasons to account for this peculiarity, which reasons he finds in the manner of the German nations as described by Cæsar and Tacitus, of their living in distinct provinces, free and independent of each other, united only when there was a common enemy, but each retaining their own established laws and customs. This certainly held true with regard to some of those tribes which Montesquieu has enumerated, but it is not true with regard to all the Gothic nations. The Visigoths, of whose laws we have been treating, are a direct proof of the contrary. So far from allowing those of different nations who were under the monarchy of the Visigoths to be judged by the laws of the country to which by birth they belonged, a Frank by the law of the Franks, and a Roman by that of the Romans, these laws expressly declare that in their dominions no other code shall have the smallest force, but that of the Visigoths. They observe, with regard to the laws of other nations, that, though abundantly eloquent, they are involved in perplexities,\* and a penalty of thirty pounds of gold is imposed on any person who shall cite in judgment any code of laws belonging to other nations. (Lib. x., *ibid.*)

In treating of the laws of the Gothic nations, I have taken this example of the laws of the Visigoths, not from any opinion of their superior excellence to those of the other nations whom we, after the example of the Romans, have chosen to term barbarous. By any

\* *Quamvis eloquiis polleant, tamen difficultatibus hærent. Ideo nolumus sive Romanis legibus, sive alienis institutionibus amplius convexari. Lib. ii., tit. i., l. ix.*

person who attentively examines the laws of the other Gothic nations, the laws of the Visigoths will not be found by any means to merit a superior regard. Montesquieu even affects to depreciate them as often vague and declamatory—a censure which will, in particular instances, apply to every compilation of the laws of different monarchs. But judicious and respectable as we have seen them to be, they must, in point of more extended policy, yield to the laws of the Franks and of the Lombards. Of the excellence of the former, M. Montesquieu has collected some striking proofs in the 28th book of his *Spirit of Laws*; and whoever wishes to see a very judicious estimate of the merits of the latter, viz., the laws of the Lombards, may find it in the fifth book of Giannoni's *History of Naples*.

The government of the Goths, as we find them after their settlement in the provinces of the empire, was monarchical. This form had its rise, as it has in all barbarous nations, from the choice of a military chief to command them in their expeditions. The throne, among the Goths, continued to be elective long after they had obtained fixed settlements. It was natural, when time had rooted them in their possessions, that a sort of mixed elective and hereditary monarchy should take place. The powerful lords and barons would not easily part with their right of election, but the choice would come to be confined to the family of the last sovereign, or he, upon his deathbed, with the advice of these lords, would nominate his successor. Such, in fact, we find to have been the case both in the kingdom of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths. The choice did not necessarily fall upon the eldest son; brothers, and even bastards, were frequently called to the throne. Torrismond, the Visigoth, was succeeded by his brother, Theodoric II. Alaric II., the Visigoth, who was killed by Clovis, the king of the Franks, left a legitimate son, Amalaric; he was, however, succeeded by his bastard son, Gesalaric, upon whose death Amalaric came to the throne. The facts prove two

things, first, that the throne was elective, and secondly, that the election was confined to the family, though not limited to the eldest child, or even to legitimate children. Upon the failure of the blood royal, the election was free.

The chief officers in the administration of the Gothic government were the dukes and counts. These officers, we have seen, were known in the Roman empire before the time of Constantine. The former were the highest in military command, and the latter the first among the civil dignities. The duke, as his name imported, *dux exercitus*, (general of the army,) was the commander-in-chief of the troops of the province over which he presided. There is, however, reason to believe that his office was not confined to a military command alone. He even appears to have had sometimes the supreme civil as well as military government in the province. Pantinus, in his treatise on the Gothic dignities, gives an instance, from which it appears that even the higher clergy were subject to his jurisdiction.

As the office of the duke was, however, chiefly confined to military affairs, that of the *comes*, or count, was principally exercised in the civil. He was the highest civil judge in the province, with power of reviewing the decrees of all inferior jurisdictions. He had the power of suspending from office and punishing his subordinate judges for negligence or misdemeanour. In the absence of the count from the town or district where he presided, he named a *præpositus* or *vicarius*, (a substitute,) to decide in ordinary matters, but with instruction to report to him all cases of difficulty. As the office of the duke infringed sometimes on that of the count in his civil power, so did that of the count upon the duke's in military; for it appears, that, on sudden emergencies, the *comes* could summon out all the military force. This was probably when, from the distance of the residence of the duke from the extremities of the provinces, or his being engaged



in the exercise of his duty in a remote quarter, there was a necessity for another to act in his place. In general, however, the office of count was that of the supreme civil judge, and that of the duke the chief military dignity; at least, it appears to have been such in Italy under the Ostrogoth princes.

The Gothic government seems then, upon the whole, to have been an absolute monarchy, of a mixed hereditary and elective nature. The nobles, it is plain, if they did not determine the succession of the crown, at least ratified it. Of this convocation of the *proceres*, for that purpose, we have frequent mention in the Gothic historians. These *proceres* were probably the body of the dukes and counts. The monarch, once elected, was absolute in the most ample sense. We do not find any laws limiting or even prescribing his powers; and it is certain that the nomination of all dignities, offices, and magistracies, was in the sovereign. He imposed tributes and taxes at his discretion; and could condemn capitally without form of trial. Of this we have a strong instance in Theodoric the Great, which is the only stain upon his memory—the condemnation of the philosopher Boetius and the senator Symmachus, on slight suspicions of treasonable designs—a procedure which only an absolute and despotic power in the sovereign could have warranted.

Here we close our review of what may properly be called *Ancient History*.

## BOOK THE SIXTH.

### CHAPTER I.

ARABIA—Ancient Manners and Religion—Rise of Mahomet—His Doctrines—Conquests—Death—Causes which contributed to the rapid progress of his Religion—Conquests of the Successors of Mahomet—Change in the National Character after the removal of the Seat of Empire to Bagdad—Learning of the Arabians.

AT the period of the extinction of the Roman power in the West, the Eastern empire was in a state of weakness, apparently fast verging to a fate similar to that which the Western had undergone; but its catastrophe was not yet at hand, and was to come from a different quarter. A small spark of superstition, kindling, in the meantime, in the heart of Arabia, produced a new religion, and a new empire which arose to a very high degree of splendour. To that quarter, therefore, we now turn our attention, to mark the rise of the Mahometan superstition, and the foundation of the empire of the Saracens.

Arabia is a large peninsula, divided in the middle by the tropic of Cancer. It is bounded on the north by Syria and Palestine; on the south, by the Indian ocean; on the east, by the gulfs of Bassora and Ormuz; and on the west, by the Red sea, which separates it from Egypt. It is divided into three parts: Arabia Petræa, which, as its name implies, is a barren and rocky country, bordering on the Red Sea; Arabia Deserta, so named from the sandy deserts with which it abounds, is adjacent to the gulf of Ormuz; and

Arabia Felix, a comparatively fertile and delightful clime, forms the southern part of the peninsula.

Before the period of which we now treat, the Arabians had lived, chiefly, in independent tribes, and were almost unknown to other nations. The inhabitants of the interior part of the country were mostly shepherds; and those of the coasts and frontiers, pirates and plunderers. They lived in tents, and occasionally migrated from one country to another, without laws, or any established police, and acknowledging no superior but the head of their tribe. Their manners are described as being, beyond measure, barbarous; their religion an incoherent assemblage of all the superstitions with which the neighbouring countries abounded. They had a confused tradition, that they were descended from the patriarch Abraham; and they retained, of the Jewish religion, the ceremony of circumcision, ablutions, and the horror for certain meats, which they regarded as unclean. With these rites, they combined the worship of idols, and the belief of three goddesses of equal power and wisdom, and co-existent with the Supreme Being.

The city of Mecca was the residence of the chief of these idols. A small square edifice, or temple, called the Cāābba, was held throughout all Arabia to be a place of the most supreme sanctity. Within this temple was a stone, which was the peculiar object of veneration, and was said to have descended from Heaven, in those days of innocence when man was free from guilt as he came from the hands of his Creator. The stone was then white, but gradually became sullied, as man became more wicked, till at last it grew entirely black. From the pilgrimages which it was customary to make to this temple, and the riches it brought thither, Mecca became the most considerable city of Arabia.

The wandering tribes had a sort of rank, or settled pre-eminence among themselves, though we know of no head whom they all obeyed. One of the principal

of these tribes was that of Koreish; yet it does not appear to have been remarkably flourishing at the time of the appearance of Mahomet; for he, though a prince of that race, was born to no ampler inheritance than an Æthiopian slave and five camels.

This extraordinary person was born in the year 571 of the Christian era.\* His father died before his birth, his mother when he was but a few years old; and his relations put him into the service of a woman of the name of Cadigha, who traded into Syria. In his intercourse with this country, he had opportunities of observing the manners of a nation more polished than his own, and felt the defects of his own education, for as yet he could neither read nor write. Syria was at this time a Roman province. He was struck with the manners of the people, their laws, their government and policy. His mind was of that reflecting turn which profits by every observation. It is probable that in this country, where he found a mixture of Jews and Christians, his thoughts first turned upon religion; and finding that the gross superstition and idolatry of his own country offered ample room for a reformation, which presented the most flattering objects to an ambitious mind, he began to conceive the project of establishing a new religion. Christianity presented a system of the most beautiful morality; but, the religious notions of his countrymen inclining to Judaism, he thought it advisable to retain some great features likewise of that ceremonial, as well as certain idle customs and ceremonies to which the Arabians had long been addicted; such as the pilgrimage to the temple of Mecca, and the adoration of the black-stone. His most politic idea was the thought of attracting proselytes to his new religion, by accommodating it,

\* The precise era of his birth has been much disputed, and has been fixed, by different authors, at various periods from the year 560 to the year 620 of the Christian era. The date given in the text is that now most commonly adopted.

as much as possible, to the voluptuous spirit of his countrymen. But as yet the whole system was, probably, only a dream, which the poverty and obscurity of its author could give him very little prospect of ever realizing.

Mahomet, however, was fortunate enough to insinuate himself into the good graces of his mistress, Cadigha, and, marrying her, he saw himself raised to a situation which made him one of the most considerable men of his country. Instead of abandoning his former project, he considered his new situation as only a stronger incentive to the prosecution of his plan, which his influence and fortune promised materially to facilitate. He began, therefore, to put his scheme in practice. He endeavoured to remedy the defects of his education, by acquiring some knowledge of letters. He affected a solitary life; bestowed a great deal in charity; retired, at times, to the desert, and pretended that he held conferences with the angel Gabriel. The epilepsy, a disease to which he was subject, was, he pretended, a divine ecstasy, or rapture, in which he was admitted to the contemplation of Paradise. He made his wife an accomplice in the cheat, and she published his visions and reveries to all the neighbourhood. In a short time the whole city of Mecca talked of nothing but Mahomet. He began to harangue in public; and his natural eloquence, which was wonderfully animated, joined with a noble, commanding, and majestic figure, gained him many proselytes.

This was the substance of the religion, which he held forth as a new revelation.\* He taught that mankind should acknowledge one God, without division of substance or of persons; an eternal and all-powerful being, Creator of the universe; that the laws of this being, whose beneficence is equal to his power, are such as tend universally to the happiness of his creatures; that the duty which man owes to God, is

\* See Sale's Koran, Preliminary Discourse, Section 4th.



to pray seven times a day : to honour him by such ceremonies as are figurative of his bounties ; to love all mankind as members of one family ; to assist the poor and protect the injured ; and to show kindness even to inferior animals. To these precepts, which it must be owned are excellent, Mahomet joined others which recommended his doctrine to the passions of his followers. He was himself of a voluptuous constitution. The pleasures of love were, by the religion of Mahomet, held forth as a duty in this life, and the highest reward for the good Mussulman in a future state. He permitted his followers to have four wives, and as many slaves for their concubines as they pleased. He himself, as a prophet, arrogated a superior privilege, and had fifteen wives.

He taught that God Almighty had engraven these laws in the hearts of the first race of men ; but that vice and iniquity gradually prevailing, and wearing out their impression, he had sent, from time to time, his prophets upon earth, to revive his holy precepts by their doctrines and example. The most eminent of these prophets, he affirmed, were Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ—and Mahomet—the last, the greatest of all—who was destined to extend the knowledge of the true religion over all the earth.

The ceremonies of circumcision, ablution, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, he recommended as exterior and visible signs by which God desired that man should signify his belief of the more speculative tenets of his religion. These laws he pretended to have received from God Almighty, by the hands of the angel Gabriel, who presented him, from time to time, with parcels of that book, or Koran, in which they were contained. The fundamental doctrines of the Koran are such as have been enumerated. They are, it is true, intermixed with a variety of absurdities—errors in history, chronology, and philosophy ; but these the countrymen of Mahomet, in his time, may well be supposed to have overlooked ; and the learned Mussul-

man, at this day, will probably consider them as corruptions and interpolations of the original text. It must be acknowledged that the work itself is full of fine conceptions, and abounds with that brilliant and figurative eloquence which is characteristic of oriental writing. In many places, when the majesty and attributes of God are described, the style is most sublime and magnificent, and resembles that of the Sacred Scriptures—from which, indeed, it is quite obvious that the composer of the Koran drew many of its most shining ornaments.

The illiterate character and ignorance of Mahomet, in his younger days, leaves no doubt that, in the composition of this work, he must have had able assistants; but, as he was possessed of strong natural talents, and a brilliant imagination, the chief merit was, in all probability, his own. The production of the work in small and detached parcels, was a highly politic measure; for by leaving it in his power to add to it from time to time, according as he was favoured with new revelations, he had it in his power to remove or explain any errors or inconsistencies, the detection of which might otherwise have been fatal to his imposture.

The disciples of Mahomet daily increased, and among these were the most respectable of the citizens of Mecca. Tumults, however, arising, and frequent disputes between the Believers and Infidels, the magistrates of the city thought it necessary to remove the cause of the disorder, and Mahomet was banished. His flight, which was termed the Hegira, was the era of his glory; his disciples followed him, and he now became sensible of his own strength. He began from that moment to be fired with ideas of conquest; he betook himself to Medina, and there, with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, he preached to his votaries—empire and dominion in this world, and eternal happiness in the next. He now determined to take vengeance on the people of Mecca,

for their blind ingratitude to the prophet of God; and marching against them, as it is said, with only one hundred and thirteen men, he attacked and took the city. Omar, one of the bravest of the Arabians, had joined him at Medina. His followers, after their first success, which was regarded as miraculous, increased prodigiously. In a few years he had subdued to his empire and religion all Arabia. With a mixture of strange presumption and enthusiasm, he now wrote to Cosrhoes, king of Persia, and others of the neighbouring princes, that they should embrace his religion; and, what is yet more surprising, two of these princes actually became Mahometans. He now turned his arms against the Eastern empire, and, marching into Syria, took several of the towns belonging to the Romans; but, in the middle of his conquests, Mahomet, at the age of sixty-three, was seized with a mortal disease, the effect, it was said, of poison. The conclusion of his life was admirable. "Let him," said he, "to whom I have done violence or injustice now appear, and I am ready to make him reparation." For several days preceding his death, he ordered himself to be carried to the mosque, and there harangued the people with wonderful eloquence, which, from a dying man had a powerful effect. It is by no means improbable that he believed himself inspired—as the singular success of all his enterprises might have persuaded a mind of that enthusiastic turn of a divine interposition in his favour. It is certain, that with his latest breath he continued to inculcate the doctrines of his new religion. He recommended to his followers to keep the sword unsheathed till they had driven all infidels out of Arabia; and, in the agonies of death, he declared to Ayesha, the best beloved of his wives, that God, by the mouth of the angel Gabriel, had given him the choice of life or death, and that he had preferred the latter.

The rapid success which attended the propagation of the religion of Mahomet, may be accounted for

from a few natural and simple causes. The first of these was certainly that signal favour which attended his arms, and, as we shall immediately see, those of his successors. The martial spirit, when inflamed by the enthusiasm of religion is irresistible: and while repeated victories persuaded many of a divine interposition in favour of the prophet and his law, the terror of his arms inclined others submissively to receive that religion which was propagated by the sword. Neither was it surprising that a religion which adapted itself so entirely to the passions of men should find a number of willing votaries among the luxurious nations of the East. The gross ignorance, too, of many of those nations might readily have rendered them the dupes of a less artful system of imposture than the fable of Mahomet; and, to add to all, it must be owned with regret, that the shameful animosities and dissensions which then prevailed among the different sects of the Christian church had too much contributed to bring the true religion into disesteem and contempt.

Mahomet, by his last will, had nominated Ali, his son-in-law, and Fatima, his daughter, to succeed him; but Abubeker, his father-in-law, had the address to secure the soldiery: he pretended a prior nomination, and bringing Ayesha and Omar over to his interest, he secured the succession.

As disputes began to arise among the Believers, Abubeker collected and published the scattered books of the Koran, which, it is probable, had never till that time been united; and prosecuting the conquests of Mahomet, he made an inroad into Palestine, defeated the army of Heraclius, the emperor, and took Jerusalem, subjecting the whole country between Mount Libanus and the Mediterranean. Abubeker died in the midst of his conquests, and Omar, by the unanimous voice of the army was called to the throne. He prosecuted the conquests of his predecessors, and in one campaign deprived the Romans of Syria, Phenicia,

Mesopotamia, and Chaldea ; then turning his arms against Persia, this rapid conqueror, in the space of two years, brought that immense and magnificent empire under the dominion of the Saracens,\* and extinguished the ancient religion of Zoroaster, of which no trace remains, but what is preserved by the considerable sect of the Guebres. In the meantime, the lieutenants of Omar were extending the conquests of the Saracens in other quarters ; they subdued all Egypt, Libya, and Numidia. In this conquest was burnt the celebrated library founded at Alexandria, by Ptolemy Philadelphus, and augmented by succeeding princes. The Saracens argued that all the knowledge which was there treasured up was either contained in the Koran, and therefore superfluous—or not contained in it, and therefore unnecessary to salvation.

Amid these extensive conquests, Omar was killed by a Persian slave. His successor, Otman, followed the steps of his predecessors, and added to the dominion of the califs Bactriana and part of Tartary ; while one of his lieutenants ravaged the islands of the Archipelago, took Rhodes, where he destroyed the celebrated Colossus ; and passing into Sicily threw consternation into the heart of the Italian states. Otman was succeeded by Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet. This prince, whose name is to this day revered by the Mahometans, inherited in many respects, the genius of his father-in-law ; but he was cut off by treason in the midst of his conquests, after a reign of four or five years. He transferred the seat of the califs from Mecca to a city called Couffa, on the banks of the Euphrates ; from whence it was afterward removed to Bagdad.

The genius of the Arabians, fired by enthusiasm

\* The Arabians, who were, in fact, Ishmaelites, or descendants of Abraham by his concubine Hagar, are supposed to have assumed the name of Saracens, to induce the belief of their being the legitimate descendants of Abraham, by Sarah his wife.—*Howel, part iii. chap. iii.*



and invigorated by conquest, seemed now in the train of carrying everything before it. It is wonderful what may be achieved by a people who are once in the track of glory. Nations, in fact, seem to have their ages of brilliancy, when all is life, and vigour, and enterprise; and these perhaps preceded, and again to be followed by, an era of inanimation, weakness, and degeneracy.

In this splendid period of the history of the Saracens, their conquests were incredible. Within half a century from the first opening of the career of Mahomet, they had raised an empire more extensive than what remained, at this time, of the dominion of the Romans.

There was a succession of nineteen califs of the race of Omar, or, as they are termed, the Ommiades: after which began the dynasty of the Abassidæ, who were descended directly, by the male line, from Mahomet. Almanzor, the second calif of this race, changed the seat of the Saracen empire to Bagdad; and from that period the Mahometans assumed a character to which they had hitherto been strangers. Almanzor had genius and taste for literary pursuits; the sciences began to be cultivated at Bagdad; and the learning of the Romans was transplanted thither from Constantinople. The philosophers and *literati* of the East flocked to that capital, where their talents attracted both respect and reward. The successors of Almanzor, educated in the school of the sciences, showed them the same favourable attention; and under Haroun Alraschid, who was himself a most accomplished literary character, learning, and all the arts of utility, as well as elegance, rose to a pitch of splendour which they had not known since the reign of Augustus. Alraschid flourished in the middle of the ninth century, and was contemporary with Charlemagne.

The sciences for which the Arabians were most distinguished at this time were medicine and astrono-

my. They had made no inconsiderable progress in mechanics; geometry they had brought to a very considerable height; and they were, if not the inventors of algebra, the first who adopted that science from the farther East. Their poetry was singularly beautiful: they added a regularity to the oriental verse, retaining at the same time all its luxuriant imagery. Haroun Alraschid himself composed very beautiful verses.

The manners of the Arabians at this period of the splendour of their empire are better learned from some of their romantic compositions, than from any accounts of historians. That book which is familiar to every one, "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments," is not only a most pleasing composition in point of imagination, but contains, as an original work, a genuine picture of oriental manners, and conveys very high ideas of the police and splendour of the empire of the califs, in the time of Alraschid.

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## CHAPTER II.

**MONARCHY OF THE FRANKS**—Uncertainty of the early history of the Franks—Metovingian Period—Mayors of the Palace—Change in the Dynasty effected by Pepin—manners and Customs—Form of Government and Laws of the Franks—Feudal System.

LEAVING at present the history of the Eastern nations, we turn our view to the Western part of Europe, to take a short survey of the origin of the monarchy of the Franks, who, in the course of a few ages, raised, on the ruins of the Roman power, a great and flourishing empire. The rise of a new dominion is also, at the same period, to be traced in Italy:—the church, which had hitherto been confined to an authority in spiritual matters, exalting herself into a

temporal sovereignty; and, under the title of a charter from Heaven, arrogating a supreme control over all the princes of the earth.

The history of the origin of the Franks is in no degree more certain than that of any of the other barbarous nations, who overran the Western empire. The most probable opinion is, that they were, originally, those tribes of German nations inhabiting the districts that lie on the Lower Rhine and the Weser, who in the time of Tacitus passed under the names of Chauci, Cherusci, Catti, Sicambri. These, and some other petty nations around them, forming a league for mutual defence against the Roman power, termed themselves Franks, or Freemen.\*

The first who is mentioned in history as the sovereign of this united people is Pharamond, and he seems to possess but a doubtful or legendary existence.† His successor and kinsman, Merovius, who is the head of the first race of the French monarchs known by the name of the Merovingian, is a personage whose history is fully as doubtful as that of his predecessors. His grandson was the famous Clovis, who succeeded to the monarchy of the Franks in the year 482. He was a prince of intrepid spirit, who from the beginning of his reign, and while yet in the twentieth year of his age, projected the conquest of all Gaul.

The Romans at this time maintained a very feeble authority in that country; and Syagrius, governor of the province, was quite unable to make head against this enterprising prince. The conquest was soon achieved.‡ Clovis next threw his eyes upon the kingdom of Burgundy. Gondebald had usurped the throne of Burgundy, by the murder of his father Chilperic. Clovis married Clotilda, the daughter of Chilperic, and

\* Gibbon, vol. i. c. x. Howel, part iii. book ii. c. 5.

† Mezeray has, notwithstanding, bestowed four books of his great History of France on the establishment of the Franks in Gaul, preceding the reign of Pharamond.

‡ Gibbon, c. 38.

on pretence of avenging his murder, dethroned Gondebald, but allowed him afterward to hold his dominions as his ally and tributary.

Clotilda had great influence over her husband. The Franks had not yet embraced the Christian religion, but adhered to their ancient idolatry. Clotilda converted Clovis;\* in all probability, by persuading him that this measure was the most effectual means of conciliating the affection of all the Gallic nations. Clovis, accordingly, was baptized, and most of the Franks followed his example.†

The politic and ambitious genius of Clovis derived from his conversion to Christianity a new pretext for extending his empire. The Visigoths, who, as has already been observed, were all of the Arian persuasion, possessed Languedoc and Aquitaine. Clovis now pretended that his conscience would not allow him to rest while a nation of heretics remained in any part of Gaul. With the assistance of his tributary, Gondebald, he immediately invaded the territory of the Visigoths, and in a short time deprived them of their whole dominions. The Visigoths retired into Spain, and made Toledo the seat of their kingdom. Theodoric the Great, who had been prevented from affording aid to his Gothic brethren by a war in which he was then engaged with the emperor Anastasius, was resolved as soon as possible to avenge their quarrel. He hastened across the Alps into Aquitaine, and there, in a decisive engagement near the city of Arles, he entirely defeated and dispersed the armies of Clovis

\* Mezeray, tom. i. p. 320. Gibbon, vol. vi. c. 28.

† The generous enthusiasm and barbarian magnanimity of Clovis is well characterized by the following anecdote. Soon after his conversion, while he was hearing a sermon, preached by the Bishop of Rheims, in which the preacher gave an impassioned description of the sufferings of Christ, Clovis suddenly started up in the assembly, and seizing his spear, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Would to God that I had been there with my valiant Franks, I would soon have redressed his wrongs!"—*Fredegarii Epitome*, cap. 21.

and Gondebald; and retook from them the whole territory of the Visigoths, which he added to his own dominions. This was the period of the glory of Clovis. He died soon after, in the 511th year of the Christian era.\*

France, which during the reign of Clovis had become an extensive and powerful monarchy, was in a short time thrown back into a state of weakness and division, almost equal to that from which it had so recently emerged.

Clovis left four sons, who divided the monarchy among them, and were continually at war with each other. Their short and distracted reigns, the mischiefs arising from a divided empire, the miserable anarchy which prevailed through every part of the kingdom, and the deplorable weakness of the whole of the princes of the Merovingian race, render the history of France, at this period, a most disgusting as well as uninteresting picture; nor is it till the rise of the *Maires du Palais*, when a degree of order arose under the usurpation of those officers, that the transactions of those dark ages become at all interesting. On the death of Dagobert the First, who left two infant sons, Sigibert and Clovis the Second, the government fell into the hands of their chief officers, the *Majores Palatii*, or Mayors of the Palace. These officers founded a new power, which, for some generations, held the French monarchs in the most absolute subjection, and left them little else than the name of king.

The proper kingdom of the Franks was at this time divided into two distinct provinces, of which the line of separation ran from north to south. The eastern part was called Austasia; the western, Neustria. Pepin, surnamed Heristel, Mayor of the Palace, and

\* The name Clovis, which is the same as Lewis, is variously given by different ancient authors; we find it Chlodovæus, Hludowicus, Chlodvig, Ludvich, &c.—*Howell*, part iii. c. i. sect. 3.



Governor of Austrasia, made war against the impotent monarch of Neustria, drove him into Paris, took the city, and thus became master of the whole kingdom. He was generous enough to spare the life of his sovereign. He allowed him the rents of some inconsiderable territories, and continued himself to govern France, with admirable wisdom and moderation, during a period of twenty-seven years. He never affected the title of King, but contented himself with that of Duke of Austrasia, and Mayor of the Palace of Neustria. The only weak and impolitic action of his life was the last, the appointment of his infant grandson Theobald to succeed him in his dignities, while at the same time he left a son Charles, surnamed Martel, in every respect worthy of those honours, and capable of asserting and vindicating with spirit, what he might, with justice, esteem his right.

Austrasia declared for Charles, who immediately assumed the title of Duke, to which, as by hereditary right, he added that of Mayor of the Palace. The young Chilperic, the nominal monarch, had a degree of spirit beyond that of his predecessors; and endeavoured to emancipate himself from that bondage to which they had patiently submitted. He treated the Mayor of the Palace as a rebel and usurper, and sought by force of arms to reduce him to subjection. A civil war took place, which ended fatally for Chilperic. Charles Martel was victorious, but allowed the monarch to retain, like his ancestors, the royal name and insignia, while he himself possessed the whole power and authority. Charles Martel governed France for about thirty years with great wisdom, spirit, and ability. He was victorious over all his intestine foes; he kept in awe the neighbouring nations; he delivered his country from the ravages of the Saracens, whom he entirely defeated between Tours and Poitiers—thus averting the imminent danger of Mahometanism overspreading Western Europe; and he died honoured

and lamented, bequeathing, in presence of his officers, the kingdom of France, as an undisputed inheritance, to his two sons, Pepin and Carloman.

Charles Martel had now assumed the name of king. His sons at first followed their father's example, and were styled like him, dukes and mayors of the palace, the one of Austrasia, the other of Neustria and Burgundy; Childeric III., a son of the last nominal prince, being permitted, in the meantime, to hold the insignia of royalty. But Carloman, the younger son of Charles, inspired with a devout apathy for the empty honours of this world, thought proper to retire into a cloister; and Pepin, the elder, now possessed of the entire administration, determined to assume the name, as he possessed the power of king.

The means which Pepin adopted to secure to himself an undivided sovereignty are characteristic of the spirit of the times. He could have deposed his weak and nominal sovereign, and put him to death. His power was equal to any attempt, of which the measures he followed afford perhaps a stronger proof than if he had resorted to force to compass his ends. He sent an embassy to Rome, to Zachary the pope, proposing it as a question to his holiness, whether he, or Childeric, had the best title to the throne. Zachary had formed the scheme of erecting a temporal dominion in Italy, and wished, for that purpose, to employ the arms of France to wrest the kingdom from the Lombards. An opportunity now offered of securing the friendship of Pepin, which the designing pontiff, on due consideration of its advantages, scrupled not to embrace. He decided the question by declaring that it was conducive to the honour of God, and the interests of the church, that Pepin, who already exercised the office of king, should possess the title also. Thus have the holy fathers often chosen to veil their schemes of avarice or ambition, confounding their own temporal views with the sacred interests of religion.

The kings of the Franks had hitherto been inaugu-

rated by a ceremony peculiar to the Gothic nation. Seated on a shield, they were carried through the ranks and received the homage of the army. Pepin, aware of the violence he had done to human institutions, was anxious to impress the belief that his right to the crown was of heavenly origin. He adopted from Scripture the ceremony of consecration by holy oil, and was anointed by the hands of Boniface, archbishop of Mentz;\* and this ceremony became ever after an established usage in the coronation of Christian princes. The church, for very obvious reasons, annexed to this ceremony a very high degree of importance. The hierarchy thus assumed a supremacy over temporal governments; and hence, in after times, has the Head of the Church arrogated to himself the right of disposing of kingdoms, as an inherent branch of his spiritual sovereignty and jurisdiction.

The first or Merovingian race of kings thus came to an end in the person of Childeric III., who, with an infant son, was conducted to the monastery of St. Bertin, where they passed the remainder of their days. This dynasty of weak and insignificant princes had filled the throne of France for three hundred and thirty-four years.† There reigned at Paris alone twenty-one princes of this race; but including the va-

\* Bonifacius was an Englishman, who, professing no other end than the propagation of Christianity, migrated from his own country into Germany and France, and ingratiated himself so highly with Charles Martel and Pepin, as to regulate all the affairs of the church within their dominions. He founded many bishoprics, and at last fixed his own residence at Mentz, which for many subsequent ages continued the see of the first archbishop of Germany.

† It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of the Merovingian period, and goes far to account for the weakness and misery of the kingdom, that almost all the princes of this race ascended the throne while yet infants. Mezeray, in his *Abrégé Chronologique*, has attached to the name of each prince, as it occurs, the age at which he began to reign.—Vide p. 323, et seq.

rious divisions into which the kingdom of the Franks was split, we have to reckon about forty princes of the family of Merovius.

In the person of Pepin, son of Charles Martel, commenced the second, or Carlovingian race of the monarchs of France, perpetuating in their name the illustrious foundation of a family which, to this day, gives princes to a great part of Europe. Pepin prepared to discharge his obligations to the see of Rome, of which he was reminded by a most extraordinary *letter from heaven*, written by pope Stephen III., the successor of Zachary, *in the character of St. Peter!* Urged by this invocation, he passed the Alps, and compelled the king of the Lombards to evacuate the greater part of his territories. His conquests put him in possession of a great part of Italy, and enabled him as is said, to bestow upon the pope the territories of Ravenna, Bologna, and several other states, the first temporal possessions of the see of Rome. This gift, it must be owned, has been called in question, as the zealous advocates for the temporal sovereignty of the popes maintain that their right, in the Italian territory, was of a much more ancient date; while those who dispute that sovereignty assert, that they never had any other title than a gradual usurpation of a temporal interest, from what was originally only a spiritual jurisdiction. What appears most probable is, that Pepin actually made gifts to the see of Rome of some of those territories from which he expelled the Lombards, to be held by the church as a patrimony, but of which he himself meant to retain, or whenever it should suit him, to assume the sovereignty.

Pepin, with all those precautions to colour his usurpation of the crown of France, endeavoured to establish his security on a more effectual basis, by diligently courting the affection of his subjects. From the beginning of the French monarchy, the supreme legislative power was understood to reside in the gen-

eral assemblies of the people, called the *Champs de Mars* (field of Mars). When the feudal system became prevalent, a great weight of authority was added to the nobles from their beneficia, or fiefs, which, in a short time, inclined the government to a sort of aristocracy. The kings, as we have seen, became absolute ciphers. Pepin, however, when he ascended the throne, changed entirely the face of affairs; yet as it would have been dangerous, with his defective title, to have exasperated the nobles, by encroaching daily on those powers to which they had been accustomed, he very politically consulted them in all matters of importance. When on his death-bed, he summoned a general council of the *grandees*, and asked their consent to a division of his kingdom between his son Charles and Carloman; which was, in fact, an acknowledgment of a right in the nobility of the kingdom to dispose of the crown. Pepin died at the age of fifty-three, having reigned sixteen years from his coronation, and having governed France for twenty-seven years from the death of his father Charles Martel.

The manners of the Franks during this period of their history form an interesting subject of inquiry. It is natural to believe that, at this remote period, slight diversities only would prevail between the manners of neighbouring tribes; and the accounts which Tacitus has given of the habits, customs, and laws of the ancient Germans, may be considered as the best record we possess of the manners of the ancient Franks. Every man was a soldier because the tribe was constantly in a state of war. The kings, who commanded these tribes, had a very limited authority. In all matters of consequence, the business was deliberated in the assembly; that is to say, in the camp. The government, in short, was democratical.

From the time of the establishment of the Franks in Gaul, we find the most evident traces of the same constitution. The king had no legislative authority,



and a very limited judicative power. All right of legislation resided in the general assembly of the people, called the Champs de Mars, from being held annually on the first day of March. In these assemblies, the king had no more than a single suffrage, equally with the meanest soldier; and it was only when actually in the field, or when it was necessary to enforce military discipline, that he ventured to exercise anything like authority. This is strongly exemplified in a story which is recorded of Clovis I. After the battle of Soissons, a large vessel of silver was part of the booty: Clovis, being informed that it had been carried off from the church of Rheims, asked permission of the army to take it, that he might restore it to the church. A soldier, standing by, struck the vessel with his battle-axe, and with great rudeness desired the king to rest satisfied with the share that should fall to his lot. Clovis durst not, at the time, resent this insolence, for all were then upon an equal footing; but he knew the privilege which he had when military discipline was to be enforced, and took advantage of it; for, some time afterward, observing the same soldier to be negligent in the care of his arms, he called him out of his rank, and charging him with his offence, cut him down with his battle-axe.\* There was not a murmur heard, for Clovis had not exceeded the limits of his authority.

This story conveys a very distinct idea of the degree of power possessed by the first kings among the Franks. The people knew no subordination but a military one. In every other respect they held themselves to be on a footing of equality and independence.

After the establishment of the Franks in Gaul

\* "Coup bien hardi," says Mezeray, "et qui le fit extrêmement redouter des François." "A very bold stroke; and one that made him exceedingly feared by the French." Tom. i. p. 311. Gibbon (ch. 38) alludes to this singular and characteristic story, but does not tell it.

things necessarily altered, by degrees, from the new situation in which they were placed. The Gauls, the conquered people, were exposed to all the brutality of their conquerors; they were treated in every respect as slaves: of this the Salic laws, the most ancient code existing among the Franks, furnish a strong proof. The murderer of a Frank paid two hundred solidi, while the murderer of a Gaul paid only one hundred. The Gauls, notwithstanding these degrading distinctions, preserved a part of their possessions, because their conquerors found more than they had occasion for. They even, at first enjoyed their lands without paying any taxes; but were subjected, in common with the Franks, to the obligation of making war at their own charge, and of furnishing lodging and conveyance to officers travelling on the service of the state.

Clovis allowed the Gauls to retain their own laws; either from policy, or because he could not give them a new code. As these laws were unknown to the Franks, it was of consequence also necessary that the Gauls should choose their own judges.

The Franks, on the other hand, were governed by the Salic and Ripuarian laws, distinctions of the different tribes or nations of Franks before they left Germany. Nothing can convey a stronger picture of the detached and independent character which these tribes still maintained after their settlement in Gaul, and their union under one prince, than their retaining their different codes of laws. It is true that these laws were new modelled, in many respects, by Clovis, and by succeeding sovereigns; for, being framed while these German nations were heathens and idolaters, it was necessary to adapt them to the spirit of Christianity.

This diversity of laws among the Gauls and the different tribes of Franks was attended with much inconvenience; and numberless disadvantages, arising from this source, were felt in the civil policy of France

down to the revolutionary period at the close of the eighteenth century. The manners of the Gauls, which, under the Roman governors, had attained a high degree of polish, were entirely opposite to the rude barbarity of their conquerors. To form a code of laws which would have united both nations was an absolute impossibility ; there arose, therefore, as necessary a distinction of laws as of manners ; and even when time had nearly annihilated the latter distinction, it was not to be expected that the laws should approach to any common standard, for those derived, on the other hand, additional force from the operation of the same cause, and the revolution of time only riveted their observance.

The ancient Germans had the highest veneration for their priests. It was, therefore, natural for the Franks, after their conversion, to preserve the same reverence for the ministers of their new religion. We find that the bishops held the first place in the national assemblies. They were employed under Clo-tarius I. to correct the Salic and Ripuarian laws, and they had a sort of superintendence over the judicial tribunals. In the absence of the king, it was competent to appeal to the bishops from the sentences of the dukes and counts.

The Franks, owing their conversion to Christianity to their recent connexion with the Gauls, very naturally chose their first bishops from that nation. This was an important advantage to the conquered people, for it was most natural that those bishops should employ the influence they obtained from their ecclesiastical functions, as well as the respect which they attracted from their superiority in literature and acquirements, to better the condition of their own countrymen, and to raise them from that state of servility and abasement to which the Franks were at first disposed to confine them. Such was, in fact, the case ; for, in a very few generations, the condition of the Gauls was so much changed, that, provided they chose

to live under the Salic and Ripuarian laws instead of the Roman, they became entitled to all the privileges of the Franks. They had their seat in the Champ de Mars, and their vote in all public deliberations. They seemed even to be regarded with more peculiar favour by the sovereigns, several of whom, from political motives, chose to attach the leading men among the Gauls to their service, by bestowing on them considerable offices of dignity in the state.

The Franks thus incorporated with the Gauls, a new system of policy was visible in this united monarchy, which by degrees pervaded most of the European kingdoms. The rise of this singular fabric, the feudal system, has given occasion to much curious speculation; and as opinions extremely various and contradictory have been expressed by eminent writers, the subject merits a full investigation.

By the feudal system is properly meant that tenure or condition on which the proprietors of land in most of the countries of Europe for so many ages held their possession; viz., an obligation to perform military service whenever required by the sovereign or the overlord, who originally gave them a grant of that possession.

In the infancy of the Roman state, among other institutions which historians have been fond of attributing to the political sagacity of Romulus, was the connexion between patron and client. Occasions have frequently occurred of remarking the error of referring to a particular author, whether politician or lawgiver, such institutions as are the natural result of the state of society in which we find them. Of this the *Clientela*\* and *Jus patronatus*† of the Romans is an example. It is evident that this connexion of patron and client is nothing more than a species of the same clan-

\* The relation of patrons to their clients, or of tenants to their lords.

† Rights of patrons, or laws regulating the relation between patrons and clients.

ship which subsists in all barbarous nations, where war is the chief occupation ; and which naturally continues to subsist, even when the state has acquired that degree of political stability in which war becomes a frequent accident instead of a constant employment. This *Clientela* was strongly in observance among the ancient Gauls, and no less so among their conquerors the Franks, as well as among all the other Germanic nations.

Among the ancient Gauls, all military power being lodged in their chiefs or kings, as their civil, juridical, and ecclesiastical power was monopolized by the Druids, it was customary for the people to devote themselves with the most absolute submission to their chiefs, who formed a barrier for them against the tyranny of the Druids, which was severely felt and complained of. This attachment to the chief they ratified by an oath of allegiance, which bound them to participate his fortune in everything. Thus Cæsar tells us, that there were few of those men who would not rush on to death when their leader had fallen, and count it the highest dishonour to survive him.

In Gaul, this *Clientela* subsisted not only between the different ranks of persons, but even between cities and provinces, with their inferior districts and villages. These last owed to the canton, province, or city the obligation of taking up arms whenever necessity required, in return for the defence and protection afforded them.

In all the feudal governments it was customary for the sovereign, whenever occasion required, to summon his vassals, by public proclamation, to repair to the standard of their lord. In the same manner, we find in ancient Gaul, as described by Cæsar, that, on urgent occasions, a general summons was issued by the chief for all to attend who were capable of bearing arms ; and to enforce the more prompt obedience, it was customary to put to death the man who came last to the assembly.



It was evident that, in this ancient policy of the Gauls, there was a great affinity with the clanship or vassalage in the fiefs or *feus*. Yet it is to be observed, that in this species of clientela we have mentioned as in use both among the Romans and Gauls, we see nothing as yet of an assignment or gift of land, which afterward in the *feus* became the subject of the contract; and in consideration of which all the services of vassalage were performed. The origin of these, therefore, yet remains to be investigated.

When Rome became subject to the emperors, they established garrisons upon the frontiers, both for keeping the provinces in subjection, and preventing inroads from neighbouring unconquered nations. Thus there were several legions stationed along the Rhine, which was then the boundary between the Gauls and Germany. To conciliate the affections of the soldiery was a very material object with the first emperors; and for this purpose no policy seemed more proper than to assign to them gifts of portions of land in the provinces where they were stationed. This, we find, was the case even in Italy, as we may learn from the first and ninth eclogues of Virgil.

Of these distributions of land we find frequent mention among the ancient Roman lawyers. They became more frequent among the latter emperors, who found it necessary to court the favour and support of the army, now become the disposers of the imperial diadem. These distributions of land were at first only for life. The first who allowed them to descend to the heirs of the grantees was Alexander Severus, who, as Lampridius informs us, permitted the heirs of the grantees to enjoy their possessions, on the express condition of their following the profession of arms. Constantine the Great in like manner made gifts of land to his principal officers, perpetual and hereditary.

In the decline of the empire there were two classes of soldiers principally distinguished, of whom mention is frequently made by Ammianus Marcellinus and

Procopius. These were the Gentiles and Scutarii. They were esteemed the flower of the imperial armies, and on them it is probable that the largest beneficia, or gifts of land, would be bestowed; and consequently that these were the *beneficiarii* so frequently mentioned in the Roman authors.

Such, then, we find to have been the state of Gaul at the time of the invasion of the Franks. These conquerors, possessing themselves of a province, which they found in a great measure parcelled out into *benefices* or gifts to the soldiery who had been its former conquerors, and adopting the very judicious policy of allowing the privileges of Franks to all who chose to live under the Salic and Ripuarian laws, made very little change in the property or possessions of those who chose to conform to that condition. It was only changing the superior or overlord, and exacting from the beneficiaries the same oath of allegiance and military service to their new conquerors which they had sworn to their former superiors, the emperors or governors. The Gentiles and Scutarii now became *gentilshommes*, (gentlemen), and *ecuyers*, (esquires); the names by which we know the ancient beneficiaries to have been distinguished in the French monarchy.

This hypothesis appears to afford a solution to all those difficulties which attend the history generally given of the origin of the feudal system. When we examine the accounts given by Pasquier, Mably, Condillac, and Robertson, we find the main difficulty to lie in this circumstance. The beneficia or feus are said, by these authors, to have been granted by the king or chief out of the conquered lands, to his chief captains or officers, as a reward of their services, and a tie to secure their aid and assistance when necessary in military expeditions. Yet it is at the same time allowed, and history will not permit the fact to be controverted, that these chiefs or kings had no land to bestow; for nothing is more certain than that, whatever conquest was made, whatever booty was gained, or

lands acquired, the share of the chief was assigned to him by lot as well as that of the private men. Of this the anecdote of Clovis at the battle of Soissons furnishes a sufficient proof. The Abbé Mably, indeed, although he takes no notice of this fact, and says at the same time that the first kings among the Franks had nothing to distinguish them from their subjects, unless the privilege of commanding the army, yet, when he comes to account for the origin of the *beneficia*, is forced to give them a portion of land, which he calls their *domaine*, and out of which, he says, they made gifts to such of the *grandeess* as they wanted to secure to their interest. What this *domaine* was, however, he does not attempt to inform us. In fact, we have the best authority to say, that the lands which, during the Merovingian race, belonged to the king in patrimony, were a mere trifle, and could by no means be the subject of those gifts or benefices. Eginhart, in his Life of Charlemagne, speaking of the successors of Clovis, at the time when the mayors of the palace had begun to assume an ascendant, has these remarkable words:—"Regi, nihil aliud relinquebatur, quam ut, regio tantum nomine contentus, crine profuso, barbâ submissâ, solio resideret, ac speciem dominantis effingeret: cum præter inutile regis nomen, et precarium vitæ stipendium, quod ei præfectus aulæ, prout videbatur, exhibebat, nihil aliud proprii possideret quam unam, et eam perparvi redditus, villam, in qua domum, et ex quâ famulos sibi necessaria ministrantes, atque obsequium exhibentes paucæ numerositatis habebat."\*

\* "The king had no other marks of royalty than long hair and a long beard. He sat on his throne and mimicked the airs of a sovereign, but in reality he had nothing else but the name. His revenue, except a small country-seat and a few servants, was no more than the precarious bounty that was allowed him by the mayor of the palace."—Eginhart, *Vit. Car. Magni*.

• "The domain of the Frank monarchs became afterward

This passage gives a very complete idea of what was the extent of the king's domain: at least, at the time when the mayors of the palace came to have authority, and we have no ground from history to presume that, before that period, it had ever been much more extensive. It seems, therefore, in every respect, a reasonable hypothesis, that the *beneficia*, which could not have been created by the kings of the Franks out of their own property, were, in fact, not created by them at all, but subsisted in Gaul at the time of the invasion of the Franks. These conquerors, no doubt, dispossessed many of the Gauls of their lands, but they did not dispossess all. The Salic and Ripuarian laws establish many regulations with regard to the Romans and Gauls who possessed lands, subjecting them to the same burdens as the Franks, of furnishing horses, provisions, and carriages in time of war. The Roman taxes and census being entirely abolished on the coming in of the Franks, the great ease which the Gauls found in being delivered from those burdens, to which their new services were comparatively light, very soon reconciled them to their new masters, and made them the most faithful of their subjects.

The authors who, according to the common supposition, hold these *beneficia* to have been granted by the kings of France out of their domain, involve themselves in another difficulty, for which they give but a very lame solution. The king, as may be supposed, being very soon divested of all his property, by the creation of a very few *beneficia*, it remains still to be accounted for, how these feudal tenures came to be universally prevalent, so that the whole property of

more extensive, and their residences in different provinces of the kingdom more numerous; but we cannot attach any great ideas of magnificence to these establishments, when we find Charlemagne regulating the number of hens and geese which each is to maintain."—*Gibbon*, cap. 59, note 88.

the kingdom was held in that way: for the fees created out of the domain could be divided only among a small number of the *grandeés*; and the rest of the kingdom would be held as absolute and unlimited property. To account, therefore, for these tenures becoming universal, a very unnatural hypothesis is resorted to. Such of the subjects as held their lands in free property are supposed to have become sensible that it would be more for their advantage to hold them as *beneficia*, and to have surrendered them into the hands of the king, becoming bound to serve him in war, as the condition on which he was to restore them their property. The motive for this extraordinary proceeding is said to have been, that they found it necessary to have a powerful protection in the king or chief. But what protection could this king or chief afford them, who was a man, perhaps, poorer than themselves; and who, according to this notion, had no other certain dependance for assistance from his *grandeés*, than from the few to whom he had granted benefices out of his domains? Had not these unlimited proprietors a much more powerful incitement to preserve their independance, which made each a sovereign within his own territory; and were they not better protected by that general equality which subsisted among them, as well as by that natural jealousy, which, being felt alike by *all*, would incite them to combine in preventing any *one* from attempting unjust encroachments?

When we further take into view that these *beneficia* were, originally, only grants for life, and held to be revocable, at all times, at the will of the grantor, the supposition of any free and unlimited proprietor surrendering his possessions, to be held by such a tenure, is wholly incredible. The exchange would have been that of liberty for dependance; absolute property for precarious possession.

This power of disposing of the fortunes of their subjects, by the revocation of their benefices, could not



long continue under such weak princes as those of the Merovingian race. The more powerful of the beneficiarii soon determined to render their situation more secure. A measure of this kind could not, it may be presumed, have been attempted, if all the beneficiarii had been, as at first, Romans and Gauls; but at this time, by the changes made by the sovereigns, a great part of the benefices must have come into the hands of Franks. These, taking advantage of the weakness of the monarchy, and of the disorders which occupied the kingdom, during the contests between Gontran and Childebert, determined to seize that opportunity of establishing themselves in their possessions. In a council held to treat of a peace between these princes, the beneficiarii obliged them to consent in a treaty, that the king should no longer be at liberty to revoke benefices once conferred. This innovation, however agreeable to the greater part of the beneficiaries, was a check to the ambition of such men as either had no land, or thought they had too little; and these discontents afforded a pretext to succeeding princes for resuming their power of revocation. The treaty in question, however, was soon after solemnly confirmed in an assembly held at Paris.

Such was the state of the lands in France about the middle of the Merovingian period; part possessed in *beneficia*, or fiefs, which were now become hereditary, and part occupied by allodial, or absolute proprietors, the descendants of those Franks who received shares of land at the conquest. In that state of fluctuation, in which property of the former description remained, till it became irrevocable in the manner mentioned, it is easy to perceive that allodial property was a much more valuable possession. Many of the allodial proprietors, during the perpetual civil wars of the Merovingian princes, found means greatly to increase the opulence and the extent of their territories. In those disorders, the castles and places of strength, where the more powerful lords resided, were naturally resorted

to by the inhabitants of the territory. They were continually filled with retainers and dependants, who sought the protection of the lord or seigneur; which being of consequence in securing their possessions from invasion, they courted by making him annual presents, either of money or of the fruits of their lands. This connexion became, in a very short time, that of vassal and superior; a tacit contract, by which the vassal was understood to hold his lands, upon the condition of paying homage to the superior, and military service when required—the symbol of which vassalage was a small annual present.

It was equally natural for the superior or seigneur to acquire a civil and criminal jurisdiction over his vassals. In those disorderly times, the dukes and counts, who were the judges in the provinces and districts, occupied with their own schemes of ambition, paid very little attention to the duties of their office. Many of them made a scandalous traffic of justice, oppressing the poor, and regulating their sentences according to the price paid for them. In this situation, the inferior ranks of the people naturally chose, instead of seeking justice through this corrupt channel, to submit their differences to the arbitration of their seigneurs, to whom they had sworn allegiance. By degrees, the vassals came to acknowledge no other judge than their superior; and, in the territory of these seigneurs, the public magistrates soon ceased to have any kind of jurisdiction.

The seigneurs were now the sole judges, as well as the commanders or military leaders, of all who resided within their territories. Even bishops and abbots who possessed seigneuries exercised these powers, and led their men out to war. The whole kingdom was now divided between these seigneurs and the *beneficiarii*—that is to say, all lands were held in feu, either of the prince or of subject superiors.

## CHAPTER III.

Charlemagne—The new Empire of the West—Manners, Government, and Customs of the Age—Retrospective view of the Affairs of the Church—Arian and Pelagian Heresies—Origin of Monastic Orders—Pillar-Saints—Auricular Confession.

THE Merovingian race of the kings of France having come to an end by the usurpation of Pepin, and the deposition of Childeric III., a new series of princes, the descendants of the illustrious Charles Martel, filled the throne of France for a period of two hundred and fifty-three years.

The injudicious policy of Pepin in dividing between two ambitious princes, his sons, a kingdom already filled with intestine disorder, must soon have involved France in all the miseries of civil war, had not the fortunate death of Carloman averted this calamity. Charles was now acknowledged monarch of all France; and in the course of a glorious reign of forty-five years, this prince, who, in more respects than as a conqueror, deserved the surname of Great, extended the limits of his empire beyond the Danube, subdued Dacia, Dalmatia, and Istria; conquered, and rendered tributary to his crown, all the barbarous nations as far as the Vistula or Weser; made himself master of the greatest part of Italy, and alarmed the fears of the empire of the Saracens. The longest of his wars was that with the Saxons. It was thirty years before he reduced to subjection this ferocious and warlike people.

The motive of this obstinate war, on the part of Charlemagne, against a people who possessed nothing alluring to the avarice of a conqueror, was ambition alone; unless we shall suppose that the ardour for making proselytes had its weight with a prince, whose zeal for the propagation of Christianity was a remarkable feature in his character—a zeal, however, which carried him far beyond the bounds which hu-

manity ought to have assigned to it. Charlemagne left the Saxons but the alternative of being baptized or drowned in the Weser. Impartial history records with regret, that this conquest of the Saxons was stained with many instances of sanguinary ferocity on the part of the victor.

But the talents of Charlemagne were yet more distinguished in the civil and political regulation of his empire than in his extensive conquests. It was the misfortune of France, at this period, to be equally oppressed by the nobility and the clergy—two powers equally jealous of each other, and equally ambitious of uncontrolled authority. Pepin, who was an able politician, had endeavoured to mitigate the disorders arising from this source, by the system of parliaments or annual assemblies in the month of May,\* to which the bishops and abbots, together with the chief of the nobility, were summoned by the sovereign to deliberate on the situation of the state, the necessities of government, and the wants of the people. Charlemagne ordered these assemblies to be held twice in the year, in spring and in autumn. It was the business of the assemblies, in autumn, to deliberate only and examine. The interests of the kingdom relative to foreign princes, the causes of grievances and the sources of abuse, were investigated; and prepared for the consideration of the assembly in spring, the Champs de Mai, which had the sole power of enacting laws. This last assembly was not composed alone of the clergy and grandees. Charlemagne gave the people, likewise, a share in the system of legislation by admitting from each county twelve deputies or representatives. These, with the nobility and clergy, formed three separate chambers, who each discussed, apart, the affairs which

\* The President Henault assigns as the reason for changing the time of meeting from March to May, that cavalry being introduced into the army under Pepin, the former season of assembling was too early to allow them to obtain subsistence for their horses.

concerned their own order, and afterward united to communicate their resolutions, or to deliberate on their common interests. The sovereign was never present, unless when called upon to ratify and confirm the decrees of the assembly, or to serve as a mediator, when the different branches could not come to an agreement.

Still further to harmonize the discordant parts of his empire, Charlemagne divided the provinces into different districts, each of which contained several counties. He abolished the ancient custom of governing them by dukes; and in their place he appointed three or four royal envoys, called *Missi Dominici*, to govern each province, or *Missaticum*, obliging them to an exact visitation of it every three months. These envoys held four courts in the year for the administration of justice; and the arrangement in which the business of these courts was conducted, reflects the highest honour on the character of Charlemagne. The causes of the poor were first heard, next those of the king, then the cause of the clergy, and lastly those of the people at large. Yearly conventions were also held by the royal envoys, where all the bishops and abbots, the barons and the deputies of the counts were obliged to attend personally, or by their representatives. At these conventions, the particular affairs of the province were treated of; the conduct of the counts and other magistrates examined, and the wants of individuals considered and redressed. At the general assembly or parliament, these envoys made their report to the king and to the states, of the situation of their district, and thus the public attention was constantly and equally directed to all the parts of the empire. All the ranks of magistrates were kept in their duty by this public and frequent scrutiny into their conduct; and the people, secured from oppression, began to taste the sweets of genuine liberty, in the subjection to equal, wise, and salutary laws.



This propitious change, reflecting the highest honour on the talents and virtues of Charlemagne, was but a temporary blessing to his subjects. His successors had not, like him, the wisdom to perceive, that moderation in authority is the surest foundation of the power of a sovereign.

The most important transactions in the reign of Charlemagne are those which regard Italy. The extirpation of the Lombards, whose dominion had been greatly abridged by his father Pepin, was proposed to Charlemagne by Pope Adrian I. The French monarch had formed an alliance with Didier, the last king of the Lombards, and had married his daughter; but the contending interests of the two sovereigns soon interrupted the amity between them. The queen was sent back to her father's court; and Charlemagne, in obedience to the summons of the Pope, prepared for the conquest of Italy. He passed the Alps, subdued all Lombardy, forced Didier to surrender himself at discretion, and thus put a final period to the government of the Lombards, which had subsisted above two hundred years.

Charlemagne made his entry into Rome at the festival of Easter, amid the acclamations of the people. He was saluted king of France and of the Lombards; and at this time he is said to have confirmed the donation made to the popes by his father Pepin.

The empire of the East was at this time ruled by the Emperess Irene. On the death of Constantine, surnamed Copronymus, his son Leo Chazares succeeded to the throne. In the first years of his reign, he procured his son Constantine, an infant, to be associated with him in the empire; and, dying, left this prince, then nine years old, to the government of his mother Irene, who ruled the empire rather as a sovereign than as a regent. She was an able woman, and foresaw the danger to the empire from the ambition and power of Charlemagne. To avert any hostile purposes, till she should be in a condition to op-

pose them with effect, she brought about a negotiation for the marriage of her son with the daughter of Charlemagne; but it was far from her intention that this match should ever be accomplished. Irene, on the contrary, was too fond of power herself to consent to anything that might deprive her of the reins of government. She kept the young Constantine in the most absolute dependance and submission; and when at last he endeavoured to assume that dignity which belonged to him, she, on pretence of treasonable designs, threw him into prison, deprived him of his eyes, and put him to death. She afterward, with the same insincerity as before, proposed an alliance with Charlemagne herself, and offered him her hand in marriage; but while the negotiation was in progress, a revolution took place in the empire, and the ambitious emperess was driven from her throne, and died an exile on the island of Lesbos.

Charlemagne found himself obliged frequently to visit Italy, both to establish his own power in that country, which was endangered by the partisans of the descendants of the Lombard kings, and to defend the authority of the popedom, which was now firmly devoted to his interests. In the last of his expeditions to that country, he underwent the ceremony of inaugural consecration by the hands of Leo III., and in the church of St. Peter was solemnly crowned emperor of the Romans—a title which, three hundred years before, had expired in the person of Augustulus. It is not improbable, that, had Charlemagne chosen Rome for his residence, that great but fallen empire might have once more revived, perhaps recovered its ancient lustre; if at the same time he had himself abolished, and his successors discontinued, that mischievous policy of the early French monarchs, of dividing their dominions among their children. But Charlemagne had no capital of his empire; his chief residence, indeed, was at Aix-la-Chapelle; but his constant and distant wars allowed him no permanent

seat of empire ; and he, like his predecessors, divided even in his lifetime his dominions among his children.

This great prince was no less respectable in his private than in his public character. He was a man of the most amiable dispositions, and there never was a sovereign to whom his subjects were more attached from considerations of personal regard. His secretary and historian, Eginhart, gives a beautiful picture of domestic life in the economy of his family, which is characteristic of an age of great simplicity. He never rode abroad without being attended by his sons and daughters ; the former he instructed in all manly exercises, in which he himself was particularly skilled ; and his daughters, according to the simple manners of the times, were assiduously employed in the various labours of housewifery, particularly in spinning wool with the distaff. For his children he indulged in all the affection of the fondest parent, and he bore the premature loss of some of them with less magnanimity than might have been expected from so heroic a mind.

Charlemagne died in the year 814, in the seventy-second year of his age. Contemporary with him was the illustrious calif of the Saracens, Haroun Alraschid, whose conquests, excellent policy, wisdom and humanity, entitle him to be ranked among the greatest of princes. He expressed a peculiar admiration for the virtues and character of Charlemagne, and cultivated his friendship by embassies and presents.

Of all the lawful children of Charlemagne, Lewis, surnamed the Débonnaire, was the only one who survived him. He succeeded without dispute to the dominions of Charlemagne, with the exception of Italy, which that monarch had settled upon his grandson Bernard, the son of Pepin.

Of the manners, customs, and government of the age of Charlemagne many particulars have been touched upon with much nicety and penetration by Voltaire in his *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations*. Other particulars, however, appear to de-

mand rather a more minute consideration than that lively and ingenious writer has thought proper to bestow on them.

We have seen in what manner Charlemagne new modelled the government of the provinces by the excellent system which he introduced into the provincial conventions under the royal envoys.

It does not, however, appear that the ancient chief magistrates, the dukes and counts, lost entirely their authority. They continued to have the military command of the troops of the canton, and the charge of procuring levies from each, according to its strength and the measure of its population. Cavalry came now into general use, but their numbers must have been very inconsiderable, for twelve farms were taxed to furnish only one horseman. The province furnished six months' provisions to its complement of soldiers, and the king provided for them during the remainder of the campaign.

The engines used in the attack and defence of towns were the same that were in use among the Romans, for the Franks had no other masters in fortification than they. The battering-ram, the ballista, the catapulta, and testudo, were accordingly employed in all their sieges.

Charlemagne was very attentive to the increase and management of his navy. To protect his trade, and secure his provinces from invasion, he stationed ships-of-war in the mouths of all the large rivers, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. The nobility of his kingdom were obliged to personal service in his fleets as well as in his armies. He made Boulogne one of the chief stations for his navy, and restored the ancient pharos of that town, which had been destroyed by time. He bestowed the utmost attention on the encouragement of commerce. The merchants of Tuscany and Marseilles traded to Constantinople and Alexandria, and interchanged the commodities of Europe and Asia. He projected, and partly carried into

execution, the splendid design of uniting the Rhine and the Danube by a canal, and thus forming a communication between the Western ocean and the Black sea. Venice, which, at the time of Attila's depredations in the north of Italy, had arisen from a few inconsiderable huts, where the inhabitants of the country had sheltered themselves from their invaders the Huns, was now a considerable commercial state. Genoa was likewise enterprising and industrious; and the cities of Rome, Ravenna, Milan, Arles, Lyons, and Tours, became noted for the manufacture of woollen stuffs, glass, and iron work; but silk was not yet wove in any city in the Western empire, nor for four hundred years afterward. A taste for the more luxurious articles of Eastern magnificence was repressed by Charlemagne, by sumptuary laws, and still more powerfully restrained by the extreme simplicity of his own manners and dress.\* The value of money at this time was nearly the same as in the Roman empire at the time of Constantine. The golden *sous* of the Franks was the *solidus Romanus*, which was worth about three dollars; the silver *denarius*, worth about twenty-seven cents. Besides these, which were actual coins, there were other fictitious or numerary denominations of money. The numerary *liber* (livre) of the age of Charlemagne was supposed to be a pound or twelve ounces of silver, which was divided into twenty parts, each of which was a *solidum* or *sous* of silver. The variation of the money of France under the same denominations has from that time to the present been prodigious. The livre, instead of a pound of silver, which is worth about fourteen dollars, is now nearly of the value of twenty cents.

The *Capitularia*, or laws of Charlemagne, were compiled and reduced into one volume as early as the

\* "He wore in winter," says Eginhart, "a plain doublet, made of an otter's skin, a woollen tunic fringed with silk, and a blue coat; his hose consisted of transverse bands of different colours."—*Eginhart, Vit. Car. Mag.*



year 827. They remained afterward for many centuries in oblivion; but were at last rescued from obscurity in 1531 and 1545, by the care of some learned men of Germany, and since that time there have been several very elegant editions of them published in France. These capitularies present a variety of incidental circumstances, from which we learn the manners and customs of the times. Unless in the great cities, there were not, in any of the European kingdoms, inns for the accommodation of travellers; they repaired, according to the custom of the times, to any house they chose, and it was reckoned the highest breach of civil and religious duty to deny accommodation to any traveller.\*

The state of the arts and sciences under Charlemagne was very low. The towns were small, thinly scattered, built of wood, and perhaps even the walls were of that material. The mechanic arts were much more cultivated in Arabia at this time, than in the Western empire. The calif Alraschid sent a present to Charlemagne of a clock which struck the hours by a bell, the first that had been seen in Europe, and which at that time was admired as a miracle of art.†

Where the state of the useful arts was so low, it is not to be supposed that the fine arts could have been successfully cultivated. Indeed in those unfavourable

\* "Præcipimus ut in omni regno nostro, neque dives neque pauper peregrinis hospitia denegare audeant: id est sive peregrinis propter Deum ambulantes per terram, sive cuilibet itineranti. Propter amorem Dei, et propter salutem animæ suæ, tectum et focum et aquam nemo illi denegat."—We command that no one, whether he be rich or poor, within our kingdom, refuse the rites of hospitality to strangers; whether they be religious pilgrims, or any other travellers. For the love of God and the good of his own soul, no one will deny to any such person shelter, fire and water.—*Capit. Car. Mag. a Baluzio.*

† Alraschid sent also a natural wonder which would excite no less the curiosity and admiration of a barbarous age—a large elephant.—*Mezeray*, tom. i. p. 474.

periods, had not a spark been kept alive by the existing monuments of ancient taste and genius, the arts of painting and sculpture must have been totally extinguished.\* As to music, we have authorities for knowing that it was frequently practised in those ages, but probably with no higher claim to excellence than their painting or sculpture. The monk of Ingelheim, in his life of Charlemagne, informs us, that while the emperor was at Rome, there was a contest of skill between the French and Roman musicians, and that the latter instructed the former in the art of playing on the organ.

Architecture, though totally changed in its style, from what is properly termed the Grecian, attained, nevertheless, a much higher degree of eminence in those barbarous times, than any other of the fine or useful arts. That style of architecture termed the Gothic, though, by some fastidious critics, most absurdly treated with contempt, has its positive merit and excellence, as well as the Grecian; its character as strongly marked, and its proportions as certainly defined. There is a melancholy majesty, a powerful ingredient of the sublime, which it is the exclusive privilege of this species of architecture to produce.

In those times, the knowledge of letters was confined to a few of the ecclesiastics. Charlemagne himself, however, was by no means illiterate. He spoke Latin with great fluency. Eginhart informs us, that he was curious in the knowledge of the motions of the stars; and that he even tried to write, but this, says the secretary, was a preposterous labour, and too late begun. But the encouragement which Charlemagne gave to literature, and the honour he bestowed on those who successfully cultivated letters, marked a

\* "Nulla tempora fuere," says Muratori, "quibus pictores desiderati fuerunt. Sed qui, qualesve pictores, bone Deus!"—There has at no time been any lack of painters. But, in faith, who were they, and what sort of painters!--Muratori, *Dissertationes*, Dis. 24.

genius beyond the age in which he lived. He was at great pains in inviting learned men from all quarters to reside in his dominions of France. Italy, where letters were not yet totally extinguished, furnished some men of abilities whom he employed in teaching the sciences to the Franks. His care extended to that country as well as to France, for the monk of St. Gall informs us, that two Irish priests (Scoti de Hibernia), having come to France, men eminent for literature, Charlemagne received them with the greatest kindness, and kept one of them in France, while he sent the other to teach the sciences in Italy.\* Nothing is more certain, than that the Britannic Isles in those ages of darkness preserved more of the light of learn-

\*On the authority of the monk of St. Gaul, the following anecdote is related of Charlemagne, which marks the strong interest which he took in disseminating among his subjects the advantages of education, and the attention which he personally bestowed on those seminaries of learning which he founded. In an examination of one of these institutions in which were a number of boys, sons of the nobility, as well as of the lowest class of the people, it happened that the latter acquitted themselves very much to the satisfaction of the monarch, while the young noblemen, on the other hand, made a very inferior appearance. Charlemagne, observing this, placed the poor boys on his right hand, and thanked them for their obedience to his orders, and their attention to their studies: "Continue to improve yourselves, my children," said he, "and you shall be well rewarded with bishoprics and abbeys. I will raise you to honour and consequence. But for you," said he, turning to his left, and frowning on the nobles, "you delicate, handsome creatures, you are of high birth and rich, you did not think it necessary to regard my orders, or your own future reputation; you have despised knowledge and given yourselves up to play and laziness, wasting your time in useless amusements; but know," said he, with a tremendous look, as he raised that arm that had won so many victories, "that neither your birth nor beauty shall be of any avail with me, whatever they may with others; for from Charles you have nothing to expect, unless you speedily recover your lost time, and make up for your former idleness by diligence in future."—*Pulter's Historical Development of the Political State of the German Empire*, book i. c. 6.

ing than the rest of the European kingdoms. *Alcuinus*, whom Charlemagne employed as his preceptor, and honoured with several important embassies—and *Dungallus*, who was likewise in high estimation with that prince for his learning—were both from Britain. Among those most eminent for their abilities in the age of Charlemagne, was likewise our countryman the Venerable Bede, who in a variety of works, ecclesiastical, historical and poetical, showed an extent of learning singular, indeed, for the age in which he lived.\*

But, after all, the low state of literature may be figured from the extreme scarcity of books, the subjects on which they were written, and the very high estimation which was put upon them by those who possessed them. The gift of a trifling manuscript to a monastery, of the Life of a Saint, was sufficient to entitle the donor to the perpetual prayers of the brotherhood, and a mass to be celebrated for ever for the salvation of his soul. A complete copy of the Sacred Scriptures given to a city or state was esteemed a princely donation. The reputation of learning was then acquired at a very easy rate. Extracts from the different works of the Fathers literally transcribed, and often patched together without order or connexion, composed the valuable works of those luminaries and instructors of the age: nothing was more common than those commentaries called *Catenæ*, which were

\* “Neque enim silenda laus Britanniae, Scotiae et Hiberniae, quæ, studio liberalium artium, eo tempore antecellebant reliquis occidentalibus regnis; et cura monachorum, qui literarum gloriam alibi aut languentem aut depressam in iis regionibus impigre suscitaverunt et tuebantur.”—“Nor must we neglect to speak in commendation of Britain, Scotland and Ireland, who surpassed, at that time, all the other Western nations in the cultivation of the liberal arts; nor of the monks who there diligently revived and sustained the glory of letters, at a time when they were greatly depressed in other countries.”—*Muratori*, Diss. 43.

illustrations of some of the books of scripture, by borrowing sentences successively from half-a-dozen of the Fathers, making each to illustrate a verse in his turn.

In treating of the manners, jurisprudence, and policy of the Goths, some account has already been given of those systems of laws, which, by the barbarian tribes, were not injudiciously preferred to the jurisprudence of the more polished nations whom they subdued. Some particulars which distinguished the laws of the northern nations, and especially of the Franks, deserve to be more attentively considered. These are the peculiar fines for homicide, the judgments of God, and the judicial combat.

Among all barbarous nations, the right of private revenge is allowed; which is not only expedient in such a state of society, but absolutely necessary, where there is neither sufficient amplitude in the penal laws to apply to the variety of criminal acts, nor coercive force in any branch of the state to carry such laws into execution. Among the ancient Germans, revenge was always honourable—often meritorious. The independent warrior chastised or vindicated with his own hand the injuries he had received or given; and he had nothing more to dread than the resentment of the sons or kinsmen of the enemy he sacrificed. The magistrate, conscious of his weakness, interposed, not to punish, but to reconcile; and he was satisfied if he could persuade the aggressor to pay, and the injured party to accept the moderate fine imposed as the price of blood.

When a government has attained to such stability as to allow the improvement of jurisprudence, the quality of persons enters but in a very few instances into the consideration of the measure of crimes. The life of the meanest citizen as well as of the highest is under the equal protection of the law. But barbarians cannot reason as wise politicians; and in a state where men are, in a great measure, their own judges and avengers, the most unjust distinctions cannot fail



to take place. It was no wonder that the life of a Roman should have been appreciated at a trifle by their barbarian conquerors, who established such distinctions among the ranks of their own citizens, that while some illustrious murders would cost the perpetrator six hundred pieces of gold, others might be expiated for a fine of fifty pieces.

The Visigoths and the Burgundians were the first among the Gothic nations who showed a spirit of equity and impartiality, as well as judicious policy, in deviating from those barbarous distinctions in the laws of their northern brethren. We have noticed the equal severity of the law of the Visigoths, both in the crime of murder and robbery; and the Burgundian code was, in that respect, alike remarkable. So likewise, as the manners of the Franks grew more civilized, their laws became proportionally equitable; and under the reign of Charlemagne, murder was universally punished with death.

The ignorance of the judges, as well as the weakness of their authority in those rude ages, laid a natural foundation for another singularity in their legal forms, which was, the Judgment of God. A party accused of a crime was allowed to produce a certain number of witnesses, more or fewer according to the measure of the offence; and if these declared upon oath their belief in the innocence of the accused, it was accounted a sufficient justification. Seventy-two compurgators were required to absolve an incendiary or murderer;\* and Gregory of Tours relates, that

\* "Si quis ingenuus hominem Ripuariam interfeceret, ducentis solidis culpabilis judicetur; aut si negaverit cum duodecim juret.—Si quis eum interfecerit qui in truste regia est, sexcentis solidis culpabilis judicetur; vel si negaverit, cum septuaginta duobus juret.—Si quis ingenuum Ripuarium interfecerit, et eum cum ramo cooperuit, vel in puteo seu in quocunque libet loco celare voluerit, quod dicitur *Mordridus*, sexcentis solidis culpabilis judicetur, aut cum septuaginta duobus juret."

—*Leg. Ripuar.*, cap. vi. vii. et xi.

"If any free-born person shall kill a man of the Ripuarians,

when the chastity of a queen of France was suspected, three hundred nobles swore, without hesitation, that the infant prince had been actually begotten by her deceased husband.

It is not improbable that the notorious perjuries occasioned by this absurd practice gave rise to another equally preposterous, and much more dangerous to the unhappy criminal. It was in the option of the judge to condemn the party accused to undergo the trial of cold water, of boiling water, or of red-hot iron. They began with the performance of the mass, and the accused person solemnly took the sacrament. If the trial was by cold water, the priest gave his benediction to the water, and performed exorcism, to expel evil spirits. The culprit, tied hand and foot, was then thrown into a pool of water; where, if he sank to the bottom, and probably was drowned, it was a proof of his innocence: but if he swam above, he was accounted certainly guilty, and condemned to death accordingly. The trial by hot water was performed by making the accused person plunge his naked arm into a vessel of boiling water, and fetch from the bottom a consecrated ring. The arm was immediately put into a bag, and sealed up by the judge, to be opened after three days; when, if there were no marks of burning, the culprit was declared innocent.\* It is well known that there are compositions which powerfully resist the immediate effects of fire; and which, in all

he shall be fined two hundred sous; or if he deny the crime, he shall take his oath and pay twelve. If any person shall kill another, who is in the employment of the king, he shall be fined six hundred sous; or, if he deny the crime, he shall take his oath and pay seventy-two. If any one shall kill a free-born man of the Ripuarians, and cover the body with branches or sticks, or conceal it in a well or any other place, which offence is called *Mordridus*, he shall be fined six hundred sous, or shall take his oath and pay seventy-two.

\* *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, a Baluzio, tom. ii. p. 639, et seq.

probability, were not unknown in those days when there was so much occasion for them.

The third proof was by holding in the hand, for a certain space of time, a red-hot iron ; or by walking barefooted over several burning ploughshares, or bars of iron. Perhaps it might be possible to elude even the dangers of this experiment, though certainly more difficult than the last. Another ordeal was of a gentler sort ; it was performed by consecrating a piece of barley bread and cheese, and giving it to the accused to eat, who, if he was not choked by it, was declared innocent.\*

Among the most inveterate and longest established of these ancient customs was that of judicial combat. Both in civil and in criminal proceedings, the accuser and the accused were under the necessity of answering a mortal challenge from the antagonist who was destitute of legal proof either to establish or refute a charge. This sanguinary and most iniquitous proceeding, which was calculated to redouble oppression, and add strength to the strong against the weak, continued, for many ages, to be allowed in all the kingdoms of Europe. So rooted has the custom been, that even the wisdom of more polished ages, and the prohibitory and penal enactments of councils of the church, and of sovereign princes, have been found quite inadequate to restrain it.†

\* Similar modes of trial appear to have formed a part of the jurisprudence of many ancient nations.

† By a decree of the Council of Trent, the practice of judicial combat is described as a cunning invention of the devil, that, by the death of their bodies, he may get immediate possession of the souls of the combatants ; and is prohibited under the highest penalty—any Christian prince permitting the practice within his dominions was to be excommunicated. The combatants themselves were condemned to excommunication, forfeiture of their property, and the person who fell in combat was denied Christian burial. The instigator of a duel, and even the spectators were condemned to perpetual excom-

In treating of the genius and character of the middle ages, it is necessary, without attempting to give a connected view of ecclesiastical history, to consider the state of the church as connected with the illustration of manners or of national policy. Before the age of Charlemagne, and during that period, the Christian church was rent into numberless divisions, arising both from disputed points of doctrine, and from less essential matters of forms and ceremonies. The Arian and Pelagian heresies, with the numberless sects which sprung from these as from a parent stem, continued for many years to embroil the church, and to occasion the most violent contentions. We have already observed that Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who lived in the fourth century, maintained that Christ, the second person of the godhead, was totally distinct from the first person, or God the Father: that Christ was the first, and the noblest of those beings whom God had created out of nothing: that he was the instrument by whose subordinate operation the Almighty Being had formed the universe; and was therefore inferior to him both in nature and dignity. The opinions of Arius, with regard to the third person of the Trinity, are not so well known. His doctrine, concerning the inferior nature of the Son of God, was examined, and solemnly debated in the council of Nice, which was assembled by Constantine, and it was there condemned by a plurality of suffrages. The Nicene creed declared Christ to be consubstantial with

munication.—*Council. Trident. Sess. 9. sub. Pont. Pio. A. D. 1563.*

The learned Mr. Harris has, in his *Philosophical Inquiries*, shown that the custom of the ordeal may be traced up to the time of Eteocles and Polynices, that is, before the Trojan war. The ordeal by red-hot iron is particularly mentioned in the *Antigone* of Sophocles.—*Harris's Phil. Inquiries*, part 3, chap. 1.

For much fanciful reasoning, and misapplied ingenuity, on the subject of these ancient customs, see Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 28, ch. 17.

the Father, and pronounced a sentence of deposition and banishment on Arius. His doctrines, however, continued to find many zealous supporters, and the emperor Constantine himself, becoming at length a convert to his opinions, recalled Arius from banishment, and ordered the patriarch of Constantinople to restore him to his ecclesiastical functions and dignities. This, however, was prevented by the sudden death of Arius, an event which his enemies interpreted as a judgment of Heaven to punish his heresy and impiety; but which his disciples and partisans attributed to the intolerant zeal of some of his adversaries.

In the fifth century arose the Pelagian heresy. The authors of it were Pelagius and Cælestius, the former a native of Britain, and the latter of Ireland. These men looked upon the doctrines commonly received concerning the original corruption of human nature, and the necessity of divine grace to enlighten the understanding and purify the heart, as prejudicial to the progress both of religion and virtue, and tending to lull mankind into a presumptuous and fatal security. They maintained that these doctrines were equally false and pernicious; that the sins of our first parents were imputed to them alone, and not to their posterity; that we derive no corruption from their fall; but are born as pure and unspotted as Adam came from the hands of his Maker: that mankind, therefore, are capable of repentance and amendment, and of arriving at the highest degree of piety and virtue, by the use of their own natural faculties and powers. These doctrines, gave a great alarm to the church. They were very ably combated by St. Augustine; and this sect was condemned by an ecclesiastical council almost as soon as heard of: but its votaries propagated their opinions in secret, and continued to be numerous for several ages.

But not only was the church rent in pieces by these disputes on essential articles of faith, other matters, comparatively of much less importance, excited the



most violent commotions. One great article of dissension in those times was the worship of images, which had been gradually gaining ground for some centuries. It arose first from the custom of having crucifixes in private houses, and portraits of our Saviour and his apostles, which sometimes being of considerable value, were, among other religious donations, bequeathed by dying persons to the church, where they were displayed on solemn festivals. The clergy at first took pains to repress that superstition. In the year 393 we find St. Epiphanius pulled down an image in a church of Syria, before which he found an ignorant person saying prayers. Others, however, of his brethren were not so circumspect or scrupulous, and in time the priests even found their interest in encouraging the practice: for particular images in particular churches, acquiring a higher degree of celebrity than others, and getting the reputation of performing miraculous cures, the grateful donations that were made to the church were a very considerable emolument to the ecclesiastics.

In the year 727, the Emperor Leo, the Isaurian, was desirous of extirpating this idolatry, which he very justly considered as disgraceful to Christianity; but his measures were too violent; he burnt and destroyed all the paintings in the churches, and broke to pieces the statues. The people were highly exasperated; and he attempted to enforce his reformation by punishment and persecution, which had no beneficial effect. His son Constantine Copronymus, took a wiser method by procuring a general sentence of the clergy, condemning the practice as impious and idolatrous. This prince had a genius for reformation. He wished to abolish the monks, who had greatly increased, and at this time engrossed prodigious wealth; but this evil had taken too deep a root. The origin of these associations merits more particular inquiry.

In treating of the earliest age of the Christian church, it has already been remarked that one great source of

the corruption of its doctrines, was an attempt to reconcile them to, or intermingle them with, the notions of the heathen philosophers. This intermixture is the true source from whence the impolitic and destructive system of monachism took its rise. It was a doctrine both of the Stoic and Platonic philosophy, that, in order to raise the soul to its highest enjoyment, and to a communion with superior intelligences, it was necessary to separate it from the body, by mortifying and entirely disregarding that earthly vehicle, which checked its flight, and chained it to the mean and sordid enjoyments of the senses. These prevailing notions of the heathen philosophy, joined to a mistaken interpretation put upon some of the precepts of the gospel, contributed to inspire some enthusiastic Christians with the same ideas. The first of these who thought of separating themselves from society were a few, who, after Constantine had restored peace to the church, being now free from persecution, began to conceive that since they were no longer exposed to the persecutions of temporal power, they ought to procure for themselves voluntary grievances and afflictions. In that view they betook themselves to wilds and solitudes, where they spent their time in caves and hermitages in alternate exercises of devotion, and in rigorous acts of penance and mortification. Some of them loaded their limbs with heavy irons; others walked naked till their bodies acquired a covering of hair like the wild beasts: and others chose still more nearly to ally themselves to the brute creation, by actually grazing with them in the fields. One father, called a *saint*, has actually left a panegyric on these *βοσκοί*, or grazing saints. A certain class, however, of a more rational spirit of devotion, employed themselves occasionally in manual labour, the price of which afforded them a frugal subsistence, and enabled them to bestow alms on the poor who visited their cells.

Egypt is allowed to have shown the first example

of the monastic life. A young fanatic, of the name of Antony, retired about the year 302 to the desert bordering the Red sea, where his austerities first attracted admiration and respect, and afterward procured him numberless imitators. He lived to the age of one hundred and five, and had the satisfaction of seeing before his death the whole country swarming with madmen like himself.

The reputation which these persons acquired for superior sanctity, and the extraordinary blessings which were believed to attend their pious vows and prayers, naturally procured them many remuneratory donations from those who believed they had profited by their intercessions. Some of the holy men began to lead a very comfortable life; and still pretending to bestow all their superfluities in arms and charitable donations, they retained as much as to enable them to pass their time with much ease and satisfaction. Toward the end of the fourth century, these monks or hermits had multiplied in such a manner, that there was not a province in the East that was not full of them. They spread themselves likewise over a great part of Africa; and, in the West, they penetrated within the limits of the bishopric of Rome, and soon became very numerous over all Italy.

It would seem that these holy fathers did not always confine themselves to their cells; but profiting by the great veneration which they had acquired for superior sanctity, they frequently found their way to cities, and took an active part in secular affairs. Under Theodosius the Great, some of these meddling priests had occasioned such disturbances in the empire, that that prince, on a complaint from the judges and magistrates of the provinces, issued an edict prohibiting them to quit their solitudes, or appear in the cities; but they had art or influence enough with this same prince to prevail on him, very soon after, to revoke this edict.

About this time many of these devotees began to

form themselves into societies, and prescribed to themselves certain observances and common rules, to which they bound themselves by oath; these were obedience to their superior, strict chastity, and poverty. These societies were called *Cænobia*; and the persons who composed them *Cænobitæ*, from their living together in common. But they took different denominations, from the names of those holy persons who associated them together, or were the first superiors of their order. Thus St. Benedict, who introduced monachism into Italy, was the founder of that particular order called Benedictine, which has distinguished itself in most of the countries of Europe, by the ambition of many of the brotherhood, as well as by the enormous wealth which they found means to accumulate; and, we ought to add, by the laborious learning which some of them displayed.

Benedict was an Italian by birth; he had studied at Rome, and soon distinguished himself by his talents as well as superior sanctity. An affectation of singularity, probably, made him retire, when a very young man, to a cave at Subiaco, where he remained for some years. Some neighbouring hermits chose him for their head or superior; and the donations which they received from the devout and charitable, very soon enabled them to build a large monastery. The reputation of Benedict increased daily, and he began to perform miracles, which attracted the notice of Totila, the Gothic king of Italy. The number of his fraternity was daily augmented, and it became customary for the rich to make large donations. We may judge of the reputation which Benedict's institution had acquired, even in his own lifetime, from this fact—that the celebrated Cassiodorus, who had long and ably discharged the office of first minister to the Gothic kings of Italy, in the decline of his life, took the vows of the Benedictine order, and founded a monastery on his own estate; where, in the exercises of devotion, in the enjoyment of the tranquillity of the

country, and in the composition of those excellent works which he has left to posterity, he passed the remainder of his days.

Benedict, finding his fraternity grow extremely numerous, sent colonies into Sicily and into France, where they throve amazingly. Hence they transported themselves into England; and, in a very little time, there was not a kingdom of Europe where the Benedictines had not obtained a footing.

In the East, the first who associated the *monachi solitarii* (solitary monks,) into a *cænobium*, was Basil, the bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, in the middle of the fourth century. From thence they spread themselves into Greece, and overran the Eastern empire, as the Benedictines had done in the West. Monasteries for women were in the same age founded in Egypt by St. Pacomo, whose sister became the abbess of the first female convent. These females, after a certain time of probation, received the veil, and took the vows of perpetual virginity, obedience, and poverty.

From the Cænobia, founded by Basil, Benedict, and Pacomo, there sprung in the following age an infinite number of other orders, under different rules. St. Augustine, in Africa, established the *Canons Regular*, whose order, we are told, was framed in imitation of the apostolic life; whence, we may suppose, they followed in their cells different occupations as artisans. Afterward the Mendicants arose, who, to the three vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, added that of living by begging charity.

It was not for some centuries after the period of which we now treat, that the military religious orders took their rise, such as the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, the Teutonic Knights, and the Templars.

What contributed very much, however, to increase the reputation of the monastic fraternity, in those unenlightened periods, was that portion of scholastic learning which was almost peculiar to them; and



moderate as that degree of knowledge was, it certainly prevented the entire extinction of ancient literature, and preserved some feeble sparks, which the care of a happier age afterward cherished and raised up to warm and enlighten the world.

As the affectation of superior sanctity, and the pride of being singular, gave rise to many of the austerities of the monastic life, the same motive led some men to seclude themselves from social life in a still more extraordinary manner than that practised by any of the religious orders. These men were termed *Stylites*, or Pillar Saints. They mounted themselves on the tops of stone pillars, and stood there immoveable for many years. One Simeon, a native of Syria, gave the first example of this most amazing folly, and passed thirty-seven years of his life upon pillars of various heights, beginning with one of nine feet, and, increasing from year to year, till he died on a pillar of forty cubits. Another saint, of the same name, lived sixty-eight years in the same manner. The veneration which these holy men acquired excited a number of imitators, and their degrees of sanctity were always estimated according to the height of their pillars, and the number of years they had passed upon them. For above six centuries this superstitious phrensy prevailed in the East, nor was the practice altogether abolished till the twelfth century.

In the age of Charlemagne, according to the received opinions of Protestants, auricular confession began first to be used. The bishops commenced the practice, by requiring that the canons should confess to them. The abbots obliged their monks to the same submission; and these again required it of the laity. Public confession was now in use in the West; for when the Goths embraced Christianity, their instructors from the East had seen it abolished there under the patriarch Nectarius, at the end of the fourth century.

The canonization of saints was practised by every

bishop for twelve centuries: at length, the number growing out of all bounds, the popes thought it necessary to assume the exclusive right of canonization. Pope Alexander III., one of the most profligate of men, was the first who issued a solemn decree reserving to himself the sole right of making saints.

Christianity was carried northward by the conquests of Charlemagne; but all beyond the limits of his conquests was in a state of idolatry. All Scandinavia was idolatrous. Poland was in the same state; and the whole inhabitants of that immense tract of country which is now the empire of Russia were pagans, like their neighbours of Tartary. The British and Irish, according to the most probable accounts, had, long before this period, received the first rays of Christianity; but in Britain it was almost totally extinguished, till it was revived under the Saxon heptarchy by the wife of one of the princes; as the Franks, in like manner, owed to the wife of Clovis their conversion from idolatry.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

Successors of Charlemagne—Their weakness and dissensions—Rise of the Feudal Aristocracy—First Incursions of the Normans—Their Settlement in Normandy—State of the Eastern Empire—Of Italy and the Church—Rise of the Secular Power of the Popedom—Schism of the Greek and Latin Churches—The Saracens conquer Spain—Extinction of the Empire of Charlemagne—Empire of Germany—Otho the Great.

LEWIS, surnamed the Debonnaire, was the only one of the lawful sons of Charlemagne who survived him. He had been, before his father's death, associated with him in the empire, and was now hailed emperor and king of France by the nobles assembled at Aix-la-

Chapelle. He was afterward inaugurated by Pope Stephen IV. It has already been noticed that Charlemagne, on the death of his son Pepin, bestowed on his grandson Bernard the kingdom of Italy. Lewis commenced his reign by making a partition of his dominions. He associated his eldest son Lotharius as his colleague in the principal part of his kingdom. He gave Aquitaine, or that part of the southern provinces of France which forms about a third part of the whole kingdom, to his second son Pepin, and assigned Bavaria to Lewis the youngest. The three princes were solemnly crowned, and the two youngest immediately put in possession of their kingdoms. This procedure alarmed the jealousy and indignation of Bernard, king of Italy, who, as son of the elder brother of Lewis, thought he had a preferable title to the empire of his grandfather Charlemagne. The archbishops of Milan and Cremona espoused his cause; but the unhappy prince was too weak to make his pretensions effectual: abandoned by his troops, he was forced to throw himself on the mercy of his uncle, who inhumanly ordered his eyes to be put out, which occasioned his death.

In the partition of his empire, Lewis had shown the height of imprudence. He had given the whole to his three sons, Lotharius, Pepin, and Lewis. A fourth son was born to him of a second marriage, Charles, afterward surnamed the Bald, for whom it became necessary to provide a patrimony. This could not be done without giving umbrage to the three elder brothers, who were in fact now independent sovereigns. Each had his party who espoused his interest; and the kingdom was a scene of turbulence and anarchy. Complaints were heard in every quarter of the most outrageous abuses; and Lewis, seriously wishing to redress the grievances of his subjects, called a general assembly, or *champ de mai*, at Aix-la-Chapelle. Here an arrogant monk, named Valla, either instigated by a party, or by the insolent

rancour of his own disposition, took upon him to accuse the emperor publicly as being the author of the general calamities; he reproached him with his design of providing for his youngest son, whom he stigmatized as a bastard, at the expense of the elder, who, he said, had as good a right to their crowns as Lewis to his own. The pusillanimous Lewis patiently heard these invectives; and, instead of inflicting on their author that punishment which he so amply deserved, he contented himself with dismissing the factious monk to his convent, where he remained no longer than till by his incendiary machinations he had brought the three brothers openly to declare war against their father. It was in vain that Lewis proposed terms of accommodation—that he set forth the equity and probity of his intentions, and summoned assemblies of the states to devise the most probable means of securing the peace of the empire. The princes were exasperated; the ecclesiastic had gained to his party several bishops and abbots; and Gregory IV., as the popes now saw it was for their interest to humble the emperors, took a decided part with the rebels. Gregory came to France, and threatened the emperor with excommunication. The French bishops, on the emperor's side, showed a becoming spirit. They threatened the pope, in their turn, with excommunication—*Si excommunicaturus veniet, excommunicatus abibit* (if he should come to excommunicate, he shall depart excommunicated). But Gregory had both resolution and artifice. While a negotiation was on foot, the pope was admitted into Lewis's camp; he corrupted one half of his army, and on the night of his departure they abandoned their sovereign, and repaired to the standard of Lotharius. The unhappy Lewis surrendered himself a prisoner to his rebellious children, and delivered up the emperess, with his son Charles, the innocent cause of the war. The emperess, as the highest mark of indignity that could be offered to her, had her head

shaved, and was thrown into prison ; and Charles, then a boy of ten years of age, was confined in a convent. Valla, the monk, now proclaimed the throne vacated by Lewis, and Lotharius was declared emperor. The first step of his administration was infamous and detestable. He compelled his father—whose paternal affection, weak indeed and imprudent, had associated him in the imperial dignity—to do public penance in the church of Notre Dame at Soissons, and to read with a loud voice a list which was given him of his crimes, among which appeared impiety, sacrilege, and murder. He was then conducted to a monastery, where he was confined for a year, till the dissensions of his children again replaced him on the throne. Lewis and Pepin, quarrelling with their elder brother Lotharius, restored Lewis le Débonnaire to his kingdom, and brought the emperess and her son from banishment ; but he did not long enjoy his change of fortune ; for his son Lewis again commencing a rebellion, the weak and unfortunate father died of a broken heart.

The ruinous policy of this unhappy and despicable prince had introduced irrecoverable weakness and disorder into the empire. Lotharius, now emperor, and Pepin, his brother's son, took up arms against the two other sons of Lewis le Débonnaire, Lewis of Bavaria and Charles the Bald. A battle ensued at Fontenai, in the territory of Auxerre, where it is said there perished one hundred thousand men. Lotharius and his nephew were vanquished. Charlemagne had compelled the nations whom he subdued to embrace Christianity : Lotharius, to acquire popularity and strengthen his arms, declared an entire liberty of conscience throughout the empire, and many thousands reverted to their ancient idolatry. In punishment of this impiety, Lotharius was now solemnly deposed by a council of bishops, who took upon them to show their authority no less over the victorious than the vanquished princes. They put this question to



Charles the Bald and to Lewis of Bavaria—"Do you promise to govern better than Lotharius has done?"—"We do," said the obsequious monarchs. "Then," returned the bishops, "we, by divine authority, permit and ordain you to reign in his stead"—a proceeding in which it is difficult to say whether the arrogance of the clergy most excites our indignation, or the pusillanimity of the monarchs our contempt.

Lotharius, though excommunicated and deprived of his imperial dignity by these overbearing ecclesiastics, found means, at last, to accommodate matters so with his brothers, that they agreed to a new partition of the empire. By the treaty of Verdun, concluded between the brothers, it was settled that the western Frankish empire, or the country now called France, which was to be the share of Charles the Bald, should have for its boundaries the four great rivers, the Rhone, the Saone, the Maese, and the Scheldt. Lotharius, together with the *title* of emperor, was to possess the kingdom—which was in fact little more than a nominal sovereignty; but to which was added, of real territory, those provinces which lay immediately adjoining to the eastern boundary of France; viz. that which from him took the name of Lotharingia, now Lorraine, Franche Comté, Hainault, and the Cambresis. The share of Lewis of Bavaria was the kingdom of Germany.

Thus Germany was finally separated from the empire of the Franks. The shadow of the Roman empire founded by Charlemagne still subsisted. Lotharius, after procuring his son Lewis to be consecrated King of Lombardy by Pope Sergius II., being attacked by a mortal distemper, chose to die in the habit of a monk, which he thought a sure passport to heaven. He was succeeded in the empire and kingdom by his eldest son Lewis. He had assigned Lorraine to his second son Lotharius, and Burgundy to his youngest son Charles. Among these princes and their uncles, Lewis of Bavaria and Charles the Bald, endless con-

tentions arose ; and the vast empire of Charlemagne, the scene of perpetual war and disorders, was fast sinking into contempt. On the death of Lewis II., Charles the Bald attempted, but without success, to wrest from the sons of Lewis of Bavaria the empire of Germany. His own kingdom of France was at this time visited by the inroads of his Norman neighbours, and groaned under all the calamities of war at home as well as abroad. The Saracens attacked him on the side of Italy ; his nephew Carloman, son of Lewis of Bavaria, had invaded his dominions ; and a conspiracy of his nobles threatened both his crown and life. He is said to have fallen a victim to this conspiracy, and to have died by poison.

Charles the Bald was the first of the French monarchs who made dignities and titles hereditary—a policy which gave a severe blow to the regal authority. It was indeed under the reigns of these weak princes of the posterity of Charlemagne that the feudal aristocracy first began to strengthen itself against the power of the crown. Walled castles and fortresses were erected by the nobility throughout France and Germany, from which they sallied out at the head of their armed vassals to plunder and lay waste the possessions of their rivals. We find in the capitularies of Charles the Bald a royal ordonnance prohibiting the erection of such castles, but the edict was contemned, and the sovereign had no power to enforce his prohibition. From this period, the barbarous custom of private war prevailed in all the kingdoms of Europe, and marked alike the weakness of the sovereign power and the general ferocity of manners of the middle ages.

The Normans, a new race of invaders from Scandinavia, began, under the reign of Charles the Bald, to attract the attention and alarm the fears of most of the European nations. The kingdoms of Scandinavia, which have been termed *officina humani generis*, (the storehouse of the human race,) seemed to have resembled a beehive, of which the stock multiplies so

fast, that it is necessary to send off immense swarms from time to time, to seek new establishments for themselves, and to leave a sufficiency of subsistence for those that remain behind. The Normans, or *Northern-men*, were a new race of Goths, who poured down a torrent upon the countries to the south of them. They had begun their depredations toward the end of the reign of Charlemagne; but the terror of his arms prevented them from making any considerable encroachment on his empire. Under Lewis the Débonnaire they made further advances. They were expert at ship-building, and at that time constructed vessels capable of containing about one hundred men. In the year 843 they sailed up the Seine, and plundered the city of Rouen. Another fleet sailed up the Loire, and laid waste the whole country as far as Touraine. They did not confine their depredations to cattle, goods, provisions, or money, but carried off men, women, and children into captivity. Emboldened by the little resistance they met with under a weak and impotent administration, they in the following year covered the sea with their fleets, and landed almost at the same time in England, France, and Spain. Spain, then under a vigorous Mahometan government, took measures to repel the invaders, and succeeded; but in France and England, the state of the country was highly favourable to the success of their enterprise.

In the year 845, the Normans sailed up the Elbe, plundered Hamburgh, and penetrated into Germany. They had at this time a fleet of six hundred ships, with Eric, king of Denmark, at their head. He detached Regnier, one of his admirals, with four hundred and twenty vessels up the Seine; Rouen was plundered a second time, and the corsairs proceeded along the river to Paris. The Parisians took to flight, and, abandoning the city, it was burnt down by the Normans. The city was at that time entirely built of wood. Charles the Bald, too weak to make head against the

invaders with his forces, gave them fourteen thousand marks of silver on condition of their evacuating France—the most effectual means to secure their return. Accordingly, they quitted the Seine, but sailed up the Garonne, and plundered Bordeaux. Pepin, then king of Aquitaine, conducted himself yet worse than Charles the Bald; for, being unable to resist the invaders, he shamefully joined them, and united his forces to assist them in ravaging the whole kingdom of France. Germany, Flanders, and England, shared the miseries of this confederacy. Charles, surnamed the Gross, equally pusillanimous with his predecessors of the blood of Charlemagne, yielded a part of Holland to the Normans, in the view of pacifying them; the consequence was, that they seized upon Flanders, passed without resistance from the Somme to the river Oise, burnt the town of Pontoise, and proceeded a second time with great alacrity to Paris. The Parisians, however, were now better prepared for their reception. Count Odo, or Eudes, whose valour afterward raised him to the throne of France, was determined that his countrymen should not basely abandon their capital as before. He made every preparation for defence and for vigorous resistance. The Normans applied the battering-ram to the walls, and effected a breach, but were bravely beat off by the besieged. The venerable Bishop Goscelin, an honour to his character and profession, repaired every day to the ramparts, set up there the standard of the cross, and, after bestowing his benedictions on the people, fought gallantly at their head, armed with his battle-axe and cuirass; but the worthy prelate died of fatigue in the midst of the seige.

The Normans blocked up the city for eighteen months, during which time the miserable Parisians suffered all the horrors of famine and pestilence. At length, another shameful truce was concluded between the barbarians and Charles the Gross, which, like the former, served only to make them change the scene of their devastations. They laid siege to the town of

Sens, and plundered Burgundy, while Charles assembled a parliament at Mentz, which, with great propriety, deprived this pitiful monarch of a throne which he was unworthy to fill. This assembly called to the empire Arnold, a bastard, of the blood of Charlemagne; while Eudes, count of Paris, was elected king of France.

Raoul, or Rollo, the most distinguished of the Scandinavian leaders, having assembled an immense body of troops, made a landing in England in the year 885. After some successes in that quarter, he steered his course to France, where he began to think of forming a fixed establishment. His son, the second Rollo, repaired the city of Rouen, which he determined to make his capital; and, marrying the daughter of Charles the Simple, to whom Eudes had ceded the crown and part of the dominions of France, Rollo acquired the provinces of Normandy and Brittany as her portion. He embraced the Christian faith, and turned his thoughts to the improvement of his provinces and the happiness of his subjects. The Danes and Scandinavians, now settled in Normandy, and uniting with the Franks, produced that race of warriors whom we shall presently see the conquerors of England and of Sicily.

While the empire of Charlemagne was thus hastening to its downfall under his degenerate successors, that of Constantinople exhibited an appearance in some respects still venerable and respectable. It has been compared by the fanciful Voltaire to an immense tree, still vigorous, though old and stripped of some of its roots, and assailed on every side by violent storms. This empire had nothing left in Africa, and had lost Syria, with part of Asia Minor. It still defended its frontiers against the Mahometans toward the eastern coast of the Black sea, but it was ravaged by other enemies toward the western coast and toward the Danube. The Abari and Bulgarians, both tribes of Scythian extraction, laid waste all the fine province



of Romania, which Trajan and Adrian had adorned with splendid cities; and growing more adventurous by their successes, they alternately committed ravages on the empires of the East and the West.

While the frontiers of the Eastern empire were thus attacked by the barbarians, Constantinople itself was for some ages the theatre of disgraceful revolutions, achieved by the most atrocious crimes. The attention dwells with horror on the bloody tragedies of this period:—one emperor assassinated in revenge of murder and incest; another poisoned by his own wife; a third stabbed in the bath by his servants; a fourth plucking out the eyes of his brothers; a mother the murderer of her own son, that she might herself enjoy his throne. Of such complexion was that series of sovereigns who swayed the empire of the East for nearly two hundred years.

To increase the misfortunes of the empire, the Russians, in the tenth century, embarking on the *Palus Mæotis* or sea of Asoph, sailed through the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and ravaged the whole coasts of the Euxine sea; while the Turks, a new race of barbarians of Scythian or Tartarian extraction, began also to make inroads on the Eastern empire. But of the first migration of these invaders we have hardly any authentic account.

Under all these misfortunes, Constantinople still remained the most populous, the most opulent, and the most polished city of Christendom. It was probably indebted for its welfare, amid all these distresses, to its extensive commerce, the consequence of its situation, which gives it the command of two seas.

At this period, the affairs of Italy and the church form an important feature in the history of Europe. We have seen with what consummate art the popes laid the foundation of their temporal authority under Pepin and Charlemagne, the donations from these princes conferring on them their first territorial possessions, which were part of the dominions of the

Lombard kings. The popes now began to consider themselves as sovereigns, in every sense of the word, and to take all prudent measures for the security of that power which they had acquired. Gregory IV. repaired the harbour of Ostia, at the mouth of the Tyber; and Leo IV. fortified the city of Rome. It was somewhat singular that there was still in Rome a vestige remaining of the ancient form of the republican constitution. Two consuls were elected every year; and a prefect was created, who was a kind of tribune of the people. Over these magistrates, however, the popes extended an absolute control and jurisdiction, and became soon the temporal sovereigns of Italy.

As the spiritual heads of the church, and the representatives and successors of St. Peter, the jurisdiction claimed by these ambitious men was not confined to the kingdom of Italy. They held forth, as a consequence of being the vicars of Christ upon earth, that they were vested with a supreme jurisdiction, in matters ecclesiastical, in all the Christian kingdoms of Europe. Pope Nicholas I., in his apostolical bulls and letters, published to all Christendom that a right of appeal lay to the holy see from the sentences of all church judicatures whatever; that it was therefore necessary and proper that the pope should have his legates in all Christian countries, to preserve the rights of the church; that it belonged to the pope alone to call the general councils, and that the canons or regulations of these councils were of much higher authority than any civil laws; that it was proper for subjects to give due obedience to their temporal sovereigns while *they* conducted themselves dutifully to the holy church, but otherwise they were tyrants, to whom the people owed no allegiance. It is easy to see the tendency of these maxims, to which it is not a little surprising that the princes of Europe for many ages should have paid the most implicit deference.

A literary forgery of a very extraordinary nature was called in, to give authority to these assumed powers. About the middle of the ninth century a book appeared under the name of Isidorus, Bishop of Seville, alleged to have been compiled by that prelate about the year 630, which contained a set of fabricated letters of the bishops of Rome, as far back as the year 93—together with fictitious, or at least mutilated and interpolated, decrees of councils; the scope of all which was to prove that the bishop of Rome was the direct successor of St. Peter, and inherited his apostolical character, and that the foundations of the church rested on him; that all bishops and ministers should be independent of the secular powers, and exempted from taxes; that the church was paramount in authority over all the princes and sovereigns of the earth; that the head of the church could excommunicate and depose them, and absolve all subjects from their allegiance. This precious code, of which the forgery was not fully exposed till the sixteenth century, had a most powerful effect in those ages of ignorance and superstition, as it appeared to contain the clear sense of the Christian church on those most material articles, transmitted down from the earliest periods, and acknowledged without the smallest dispute.\*

Yet, in the middle of the ninth century, and at a time when the papal authority was at its height, one circumstance of a very extraordinary nature is said to have occurred, which, with evil-disposed men, threw much ridicule upon the clergy, and particularly on the holy see—as, if true, it certainly interrupted that so much vaunted succession of regular bishops of Rome, which is said to have followed from the days of St. Peter to the present. This was no less than the election of a woman to the dignity of the popedom. Be-

\* On this curious subject see Putter. *Hist. Devel. of the German Empire*, b. i. chap. 7; Cosin's *Scholastical Hist. of the Canons of Scripture*, ch. vii. § 83; Mosheim's *Ecclesiast. Hist.*, cent. ix. part ii. chap. ii. § 8.

tween the pontificate of Leo IV., who died in the year 855, and that of Benedict III., who was elected in 858, a certain woman, who had the address to disguise her sex for a considerable time, is said, by learning, genius, and great address, to have made her way to the papal chair, and to have governed the church for two years. This real or fabulous personage is known by the title of Pope Joan. During five centuries this event was generally believed, and a vast number of writers bore testimony to its truth; nor until the period of the reformation of Luther was it considered by any as either incredible in itself or ignominious to the church. But in the seventeenth century, the existence of this female pontiff became the subject of a keen and learned controversy between the Protestants and the Catholics; the former supporting the truth of the fact, and the latter endeavouring to invalidate the evidence on which it rests. Mosheim, a very learned and acute writer, steers a middle course; and though he is disposed to doubt the many absurd and ridiculous circumstances with which the story has been embellished, for the purpose of throwing ridicule on the head of the Romish church, yet is inclined to think that it is not wholly without foundation. Gibbon treats the story as a mere fable.\*

It is curious to remark that while the clergy were steadily aiming at temporal power, secular princes, as if interchanging character with them, seem to have fixed their chief attention on spiritual concerns. The monastic life was now universally in the highest esteem, and nothing could equal the veneration that was paid to such as devoted themselves to the sacred gloom and indolence of a convent. The Greeks and Orientals had long been accustomed to regard the monkish discipline with the greatest veneration, but at this time the same folly had infected the whole of Europe.

\* For an ingenious statement of the whole controversy, see Bayle's Dict., art. Papesse Jeanne.

Kings, dukes, and counts, regarding their secular duties as mean and sordid, beheld with contempt everything that regarded this world, and, abandoning their thrones and temporal honours, shut themselves up in monasteries, and devoted themselves entirely to the exercises of prayer and mortification. Others, whose zeal had not led them quite so far, showed their reverence for the church by employing ecclesiastics in every department of secular government. At this time all embassies, negotiations, and treaties of state, were conducted by monks and abbots, who most naturally contrived that all public measures should contribute to the great end of advancing the sovereign and paramount jurisdiction of the pope and the ecclesiastical councils.

At this period, however, when everything seemed to concur in increasing the power of the popedom, that remarkable schism took place which separated the Greek from the Latin church. The patriarchal see of Constantinople was the object of ambitious contention, as well as the imperial throne. The emperor, dissatisfied with the patriarch Ignatius, deposed him from his office, and put Photius, eunuch of the palace, a man of great talents and abilities, in his place. Pope Nicholas, jealous of his authority which he had some reason to think was encroached on by the patriarchs of Constantinople, who had withdrawn the provinces of Illyrium, Macedonia, Achaia, Thessaly, and Sicily, from their dependance on the holy see, sent a solemn embassy to Constantinople, to reclaim those provinces. His demand was treated with contempt, and the patriarch of Constantinople avowed openly his pretensions to an equality of power with the Roman pontiff. Pope Nicholas determined to vindicate his authority against this formidable usurpation, and for this reason took the part of Ignatius, the deposed patriarch, against Photius, who had been raised to that dignity by the emperor. He thundered out a sentence of excommunication against Photius,



deposing him from his sacerdotal function ; to which Photius replied by excommunicating the Pope, and deposing him from the apostolical chair. He then assumed the title of *Œcumenical* or General Patriarch, and accused all the western bishops of heresy, not only for adhering to the Roman pontiff, but for various heterodox articles of doctrine, and unchristian practices: such, for example, as using unleavened bread in the sacrament; eating cheese and eggs in Lent; shaving their beards; and lastly, that they prohibited priests to marry, and separated from their wives such married men as chose to go into orders. The last of these articles, he alleged, gave rise to the most scandalous immoralities. During the dependence of this dispute between the pontiffs, Michael, the emperor, who had raised Photius to the patriarchal chair, was murdered by his rival Basileus, who, immediately on his mounting the imperial throne, deposed the patriarch in the midst of his triumph; and a council of the church being called at this time, at Rome, Photius was unanimously condemned to do penance for his usurpations and heresies. Soon after, however, Photius, who was a man of consummate ability, prevailed on the emperor to reinstate him as patriarch, and he was now declared innocent by four hundred bishops, three hundred of whom were the same men who had before signed his condemnation. This is a disgraceful picture of depravity; but conscience and religion are too weak to combat against state policy.

While the Pope found it for his interest to be on good terms with the emperor of the East, there was great peace and harmony in the general councils, and no controversies arose on disputed articles of faith or discipline. Pope John VIII. was a good politician; but his successors, having quarrelled with the Greek empire, adopted the decrees of that council which had condemned Photius, and rejected those of the last council which had acquitted him. Photius, on his

part, immediately resumed the accusation of heretical tenets, the celibacy of the clergy, shaving the beard, and eating eggs in Lent; and, at once, contended for the supremacy of the see of Constantinople over all the bishops in Christendom. Photius, whose life was strangely chequered with good and evil fortune, was deposed, and died in disgrace; but his successors adhered to his pretensions and supported them with vigour, so that, for many ages, the dispute continued with great animosity.\*

During these perpetual contests for ecclesiastical power and pre-eminence, the Christian religion itself was debased both by the practice and the principles of its teachers. The sole object of the clergy was to accumulate wealth and temporal distinctions. While they indulged in every species of voluptuousness and debauchery, they were so deplorably ignorant, that it is confidently asserted there were many bishops who could not repeat the Apostles' Creed, nor read the sacred Scriptures. This, indeed, was a necessary consequence of the iniquitous distribution of ecclesiastical preferments. These were either sold to the highest bidder, or were bestowed as bribes by the sovereigns and superior pontiffs, to attach the most artful and often the most worthless to their interest. Hence it was that the most flagitious and ignorant wretches were frequently advanced to the highest stations in the church; and that upon several occa-

\* Photius was in all respects a remarkable man. During a life almost constantly embroiled in political intrigues, he yet found time to cultivate letters with high success; and there are several of his works remaining which evince a great depth of erudition, a surprising diversity of knowledge, and much critical judgment. Of these the most remarkable is his "*Bibliotheca*," which contains an analytical account of about two hundred and eighty of the most celebrated of the ancient Greek writers, the greater part of whose works have perished; so that this analysis of Photius, which is most minute and accurate, and in many instances an abridgment of the original works, is, on that account, an invaluable composition.

sions civil magistrates, artificers, and even soldiers, were by a strange metamorphosis converted into bishops and abbots.

While the Constantinopolitan empire was thus entirely occupied with theological dissensions, which produced no other fruit than intestine division and weakness, the Saracens, equally zealous in propagating the doctrines of their false prophet, studied, at the same time, the aggrandizement of their empire, and were making rapid encroachments on the territories of the Christian princes. In the beginning of the eighth century, they subverted the dominion of the Visigoths in Spain; and, with very little difficulty, achieved the conquest of the whole of that peninsula.

The califs, as already observed, had in a very few years from the first foundation of their empire by Mahomet, reared up a most extensive dominion in Asia, Africa, and Europe. In Africa, they were masters of all that had formerly been subject to the Roman power; and, at the time of which we now treat, they had lately founded the city of Morocco, in the neighbourhood of Mount Atlas. The caliph, Valid Almanzor, had given the government of his African states to his viceroy Muza, who, projecting the conquest of Spain, sent thither his lieutenant Tariffe with a very considerable army. The situation of the country was at the time extremely favourable for such an enterprise. Witiza, the Gothic prince, was one of the weakest of men, and his successor Rodrigo one of the most wicked and profligate. The Goths were attached by no affection to their governors, and it was with difficulty that an armed force was collected sufficient to take the field against the invaders. In one memorable engagement Rodrigo lost his life, and the Saracens, in the year 713, became masters of the whole country. The conquerors did not abuse their success; they left the vanquished Goths in possession of their property, their laws, and their religion. Abdallah, the Moor, married the widow of Rodrigo, and

the two nations formed a perfect coalition. In the space of thirty months all Spain had been joined to the empire of the califs, except the Rocks of Asturias, where Pelayo, a relation of the last king Rodrigo, preserved his liberty, kept a sort of court, and, as the Spanish historians say, transmitted his crown to his son Favila, who maintained for several years this little remnant of a Christian monarchy in the midst of the conquerors of his country. The Moors, for some time, carried everything before them, and pushed their conquests beyond the Pyrenees into Gaul; but a spirit of division arising among their emirs, or governors, some of whom aimed at independent power, Lewis the Débonnaire took advantage of these disturbances, sent an army into Spain, and invested Barcelona, which he took after a siege of two years.

From this period, the Moorish power in the north of Spain began to decline; they had shaken off the dependance of their califs, and they were no longer supported by their countrymen of Africa. The Christian monarchy in the heart of the Asturias began at this time to recover vigour. Alphonso the Chaste, who was of the race of Pelayo, refused any longer to pay the annual tribute which the Moors had exacted. The Christians of Navarre followed the example of their brethren of the Asturias, and chose for themselves a king, as did likewise those of the province of Arragon; and in a few years neither the Mahometans nor the French were in possession of any part of the northern provinces. It was at this time that the Normans invaded Spain; but, meeting with a repulse which they did not expect, they turned back and plundered France and England.

While the Moors were thus losing ground in the north of Spain, their countrymen had established a very flourishing monarchy in the southern part of the Peninsula. Abdalrahman, the last heir of the family of the Ommiades, the califate being now possessed by the Abassidæ, betook himself to Spain, where, be-

ing recognized by a great part of the Saracens in that country as the representative of their ancient califs, he encountered and defeated the viceroy of the rival calif, and was acknowledged sovereign of all the Moorish possessions in the south of Spain. He fixed the seat of his residence at Cordova, which from that time, and for two centuries after, was distinguished as the capital of a very splendid monarchy. It is this period, from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the tenth century, which is to be accounted the most flourishing age of Arabian magnificence. While Haroun Alraschid made Bagdad the seat of a great and polished empire, and cultivated the arts and sciences with high success, the Moors of Cordova, under Abdalrahman and his successors, vied with their Asiatic brethren in the same honourable pursuits, and were, unquestionably, the most enlightened of the states of Europe at this period. The empire of the Franks indeed, under Charlemagne, exhibited a beautiful picture of order, sprung from confusion and weakness, but terminating with the reign of this illustrious monarch, and leaving no time for the arts introduced by him to make any approach to perfection. The Moors of Spain, under a series of princes, who gave every encouragement to genius and industry, though fond at the same time of military glory, gained the reputation of superiority both in arts and arms to all the nations of the West. The Moorish structures in Spain, which were reared during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, many of which yet remain, convey an idea of opulence and grandeur which almost exceeds belief. The Mosque of Cordova, begun by Abdalrahman the First, and finished about the year 800, is still almost entire, and countenances every notion which historians have given of the splendour and magnificence of the Moorish monarchy of Spain.

The Saracens were at this time extending their conquests in almost every quarter of the world. The Mahometan religion was now embraced over the most



of India, and along the Eastern and Mediterranean coast of Africa. Some of the African Saracens invaded Sicily, as they had done Spain, and the arms neither of the eastern nor of the western emperors were able to drive them out of it. From Sicily they began to meditate the conquest of Italy; they sailed up the Tyber, ravaged the country, and laid siege to Rome. A French army, under one of Lotharius's generals, advancing to its relief was beaten; but the city, in the meantime, being supplied with provisions, the Saracens, thought fit to desist for a while until they should increase their forces. On this occasion Pope Leo IV. showed himself worthy of being a sovereign. He employed the treasures of the church in fortifying the city, stretching iron chains across the Tyber, and making every preparation for a vigorous defence. The spirit of an ancient Roman seemed revived in this venerable pontiff; he infused courage and resolution into all around him. The Saracens, on attempting to land, were furiously driven back and cut to pieces: a storm had dispersed one half of their ships; and the invaders, unable to retreat, were either slaughtered or made prisoners.

The Saracens might have reared an immense empire, had they, like the Romans, acknowledged only one head; but their generals always affected independence. Egypt shook off the yoke of the califs, and became the residence of an independent sultan. Mauritania followed the same example, and became the empire of Morocco, under its absolute prince. Spain, or at least the kingdom of Cordova, had thrown off its dependance on the califs of the race of Abassidæ, and obeyed a race of princes of the ancient family of the Ommiades. In this state of division, the Saracen power had ceased to be considered as one empire; yet it is to be observed, that all these separate sovereigns continued to respect the calif of the East as the successor of Mahomet, though they acknowledged to him no temporal subjection.

After the deposition of Charles the Gross, the empire of Charlemagne subsisted only in name. Arnold, or Arnulph, a bastard son of Charlemagne, made himself master of Germany. Italy was divided between Guy, duke of Spoleto, and Berengarius duke of Friuli, who had received these duchies from Charles the Bald. Arnold considered France to be his property as emperor, but in the meantime it was possessed by Eudes and Charles the Simple. The dukes of Spoleto and Friuli had their pretensions to the empire as well as Arnold: they were both of the blood of Charlemagne. Formosus, who was Pope at this time, complaisantly invested them all three in succession with the imperial dignity; in fact, the Roman empire no longer subsisted. The country which obeyed the nominal emperors was but a part of Germany; while France, Italy, Spain, Burgundy, and the countries between the Maese and the Rhine, were possessed by different independent princes. The emperors were tumultuously elected by the bishops, and such of the grandees as were most in power, who were become hereditary princes, and who, in reality, were more independent than their sovereign.

. In speaking of the election of emperors at this period, it is not to be supposed that there was any limited number of electors, as came afterward to be the case. A century after the period of which we now treat, we have historical evidence that the election of the emperor was in the people at large; but by what means the sentiments of the people were taken it is not easy to conceive. Probably each duke, or count, was considered as the organ of the district over which he presided.

After the death of Arnold, his son Lewis was chosen emperor of the Romans. He was the last of the blood of Charlemagne; and upon his death Otho, duke of Saxony, by his influence and credit, put the crown upon the head of Conrad, duke of Franconia; on whose death Henry, surnamed "The Fowler," son of the

same Duke Otho of Saxony, was elected emperor, in the year 918.

The incapacity of preceding emperors, and the disorders occasioned by the vast number of petty princes who all exercised sovereign authority in their own states, had reduced the empire to extreme weakness. The Hungarians, descendants of the ferocious Huns, committed such depredations, that the Emperor Conrad was content to pay an annual tribute to keep them quiet. Henry the Fowler, who was a prince of great abilities and excellent endowments, changed the face of affairs much for the better. His good policy united the disorderly nobles; he vanquished the Hungarians, and freed the empire from the disgraceful tribute which was imposed during the reign of his predecessor. To this prince Germany owes the foundation of her cities; for before this period, excepting the castles on the mountains, the seats of the barbarous nobility who lived by plunder, and the convents, filled with a useless herd of ecclesiastics, the bulk of the people lived dispersed in lonely farms and villages. The towns built by Henry were surrounded with walls, and regularly fortified; they were capable of containing a considerable number of inhabitants; and, in order that they might be speedily peopled, it was enjoined by the sovereign that every ninth man should remove himself, with his whole effects, from the country, and settle in the nearest town. In the same spirit of judicious policy, Henry subjected the tilts and tournaments to proper regulations: thus preserving and encouraging an institution which kept alive among his subjects the martial spirit, and that high sense of honour which prompts to deeds of heroism; while he restrained every thing in the practice which savoured of barbarism, or tended to insubordination, by rendering individuals the judges and avengers in their own quarrels. This prince held no correspondence with the see of Rome; he had been consecrated by his own bishops, and du-

ring his whole reign Germany seemed to have lost sight of Italy.

Henry the Fowler was succeeded by his son Otho the Great, who again united Italy to the empire, and kept the aspiring popedom in subjection. Otho was, in every respect, the character of the greatest celebrity at this time in Europe. He increased the imperial dominions by the addition of the kingdom of Denmark, or at least rendered that nation for a considerable time tributary to the imperial crown. He annexed Bohemia likewise to the empire; and seems to have assumed to himself a jurisdiction paramount in authority over all the sovereigns of Europe.

Italy, at the accession of Otho the Great, was the scene of crimes equally detestable, and murders as atrocious, as those which stained the annals of the Constantinopolitan empire at the same period. Formosus had been Bishop of Porto before he arrived at the popedom, and in that station he had been twice excommunicated by Pope John VIII. for rebellion and misdemeanor. Stephen, who succeeded Formosus in the see of Rome, caused his body to be dug up: the corpse was convicted of various crimes, beheaded, and flung into the Tyber. The friends of Formosus, however, conspired against and deposed Stephen, who was afterward strangled in prison, while the body of Formosus was recovered, embalmed, and interred with all pontifical honours. Sergius III., who, before he arrived at the popedom, had been banished by John IX., a friend of Formosus, no sooner attained the pontifical chair, than he caused this abused carcass to be dug out of the grave a second time, and thrown into the Tyber.

Marozia, the mistress of Sergius III., and her sister Theodora, two women of the most abandoned and flagitious character, now ruled everything in Rome; and maintaining their ascendancy by the most detestable crimes, and murders without end, they filled the pon-

tifical chair in rapid and monstrous succession with their paramours or their adulterous offspring.

While Rome and the church were thus rent in pieces, Berengarius, duke of Friuli, disputed with Hugh of Arles the sovereignty of Italy. Such was the situation of things when, at the solicitation of most of the Italian cities, and even of the Pope himself, Otho the Great was called to the aid of this unfortunate country. He entered Italy, overcame the duke of Friuli, and was consecrated by the Pope emperor of the Romans, with the titles of Cæsar and Augustus, his holiness himself taking the oath of allegiance to him. Otho hereupon confirmed the donations made to the holy see by Pepin, Charlemagne, and Lewis the Debonnaire. John XII. was not long faithful to his engagement of alliance. He entered into a confederacy with the Duke of Friuli, invited his son to Rome, and solicited the Hungarians to invade Germany. Otho hastened back to Rome, which he had but recently quitted, called a council, and brought the Pope to trial. John was deposed, and Otho again left Rome; but hardly had he taken his departure when John had the address to excite an insurrection of the people, who dethroned his rival Leo VIII., and reinstated him in the pontifical chair. But John did not live to enjoy his triumph: three days after his reinstatement he met the reward of his crimes, and perished by the hand of an indignant husband, who detected him in the arms of his wife. These dissensions again recalled Otho to Rome, where he took an exemplary vengeance on his enemies by hanging half the senate. Such was the state of Rome under Otho the Great; and it continued with little variation under Otho II. and III., under Henry II. and Conrad, surnamed the Salic. Amid these contentions of parties it became a usual practice to adjust the difference by setting the popedom up to public sale, and disposing of it to the highest bidder, and bishoprics and inferior benefices were filled in the same manner. Benedict



VIII. and John XIX., two brothers, publicly bought the popedom one after another, and on the death of the latter it was purchased in a similar manner for a child ten years of age, Benedict IX. The Emperor Henry III., who was a prince of abilities and authority, resumed to himself the right of filling the pontifical chair, and nominated successively three Popes without any opposition on the part of the church or people of Rome.

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## CHAPTER V.

**HISTORY OF BRITAIN**—Earliest state—Landing of Julius Cæsar—Conquest by the Romans—Abandonment of Britain on the Gothic Invasion of Italy—Irruptions of the Picts and Caledonians—Saxon Invasion—Heptarchy—Union under Egbert—Danish Invasions—Alfred the Great—His Institutions—His Successors—Norman Conquest.

THE history of the British Isles has hitherto been postponed, till we should be enabled to consider it in one connected view, from its rudest stage to the end of the Anglo-Saxon government, and the conquest of England by the Normans, which properly constitutes the first period of British history.

The origin of the population of kingdoms is always uncertain. Arguments derived either from a similarity of manners among ancient nations, or from the etymology of local names, and designations of provinces and their inhabitants, are extremely fallacious and inconclusive. Nations the most unconnected, when examined in the same state of society, or at the same period of their progress from barbarism to civilization, will always exhibit a similarity of manners; which, therefore, can never be considered as a proof of their relation to each other: and there is no opinion of the

origin of nations, however whimsical or ridiculous, that may not find its support from the versatile and pliable etymology of words. Such speculations fall not within the province of the general historian.

All ancient writers agree in representing the first inhabitants of Britain as a tribe of Gauls; the Romans found among them the same monarchical government, the same religion and language, as among the Celtæ on the continent. They were divided into many small nations or tribes, unconnected with and independent of each other. Tacitus mentions a spirit of independence to have prevailed even among the individuals of each state or nation, which, while it excited frequent factions, prevented the chief or prince from ever attaining the absolute authority of a despot. Their religion was that of the Druids; the uncertainty regarding whose particular tenets is universally acknowledged. It is, however, generally agreed that they taught the belief of one God, creator of the universe; of the limited duration of the world, and its destruction by fire; of the immortality of the human soul and its transmigration through different bodies, in which the just and the wicked met with a retribution for their conduct in the present state: but on these doctrines as general principles they seem to have reared an immense superstructure of fable. Their worship was polluted by the horrid practice of human sacrifice; and the chief office of their priests was to divine future events from the flowing of the blood of the victim, or the posture in which he fell after receiving the fatal blow. The influence of this religion was so great as to extend over every department of the government of the Britons. The Druids were not only the priests, but the judges, civil and criminal; and the bondage in which they held the minds of the people was so strict as to supply the place of laws. The Romans, after the conquest of Gaul, found it impossible to reconcile to their laws and institutions the nations whom they had subdued, while this religion

subsisted, and in this instance were obliged to depart from their usual principles of toleration. They abolished the religion of the Druids by the severest penal enactments.\*

In this situation were the inhabitants of Britain when Julius Cæsar, after having overcome the Gauls, began to look to the conquest of this island. The natives, conscious of their inability long to resist the Roman arms, endeavoured, before his arrival, to appease him by submissions, which had no effect in altering his purpose. He landed, as is supposed, near to Deal; and, contrary to his expectation, found himself opposed, not by a tumultuous troop of barbarians, but by a regular and well-disciplined army, who attacked him with the most determined courage. Though repulsed, they persevered in repeated attacks on the legions, and, availing themselves of all their local advantages, spun out the campaign till the approach of winter, with very little loss to themselves. Cæsar was soon equally disposed as they to an accommodation; and after some weeks spent in ineffectual operations, he re-embarked his troops, determined to return with a much greater force. In his second invasion, he brought with him five legions, making at least twenty thousand foot, a competent body of horse, and a fleet of eight hundred sail.

To resist so formidable an army, the Britons, hitherto disunited under their different princes, entered into a confederacy, appointing Cassibellanus, king of the Trinobantes,† their commander-in-chief. They now made a most desperate resistance, and showed all the ability of practised warriors. The contest, however, was in vain; Cæsar gained several advantages; he

\* A most elaborate account of the history, manners, learning, and religion of the Druids, is to be found in Henry's History of Britain, b. i. ch. 4.

† The country of the Trinobantes comprehended Middlesex and Essex.—*Camden*.

penetrated into the country, burnt the capital of Cassibellanus, the present St. Albans, or Verulamium; deposed that prince, and established his own ally, Mandubratius, upon the throne; and, finally, after compelling the country to articles of submission, he returned again into Gaul.

Britain was for some time rescued from the yoke of the Romans by the civil wars in Italy, which gave sufficient employment at Rome; and, after the fall of the commonwealth, the first emperors were satisfied with the conquests they had obtained over the liberties of their country: so that the Britons for near a century enjoyed their freedom unmolested.\* But in the reign of Claudius the conquest of Britain was seriously determined. Claudius, after paving the way by Plautius, one of his generals, arrived himself in the island, and received the submission of the south-east provinces. The rest, under Caractacus, or Caratach, made an obstinate resistance; but were at length subdued by Ostorius Scapula; and Caractacus, as has been already noticed, was defeated, and sent prisoner to Rome; where his magnanimous behaviour procured him a very respectful treatment.†

Yet the island was not subdued. Suetonius Paulinus, under the emperor Nero, was invested with the chief command. He directed his first attempts against the island of Mona, now Anglesey, upon the coast of Wales, which was the centre of the Druidical superstition; and expelling the Britons from the island, who made a most frantic resistance, he burnt many of the Druids, and destroyed their consecrated groves and altars. Having thus triumphed over the religion of

\* The Britons conciliated the favour of Augustus by sending ambassadors to Rome, from time to time, with presents. These consisted of works in *ivory* (query, whence the material?) bridles, chains, amber, and glass-vessels.—*Strabo*, lib. iv.

† For a brief narrative of the Roman transactions in Britain prior to the time of Agricola, see Tacitus, vit. Agr. cap. xiii. &c.

the Britons, he thought his future progress would be easy ; but he was disappointed in his expectations. The Britons, more exasperated than intimidated, were all in arms, and headed by Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, had attacked several of the Roman settlements. Suetonius hastened to the protection of London. The Britons, however, reduced it to ashes, massacred the inhabitants that remained in it, putting to death seventy thousand of the Romans and their allies. Suetonius revenged these losses by a decisive victory, in which eighty thousand Britons fell in the field. Boadicea, to escape slavery, or an ignominious death, put an end to her own life by poison. Still this success was not attended with the reduction of the island, which was not accomplished till Julius Agricola received the command, and formed a regular plan for the subjugation of Britain. He secured every advantage which he obtained by proper garrisons ; and, pushing northward beyond the centre of the island, he fixed a chain of forts between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, which secured the Roman provinces from the incursions of the barbarous inhabitants from the north. He cultivated very successfully, likewise, the arts of peace ; and, by degrees, reconciled the southern Britons to the laws and government of the Romans. The Caledonians still defended their barren mountains, which, happily for them, the Romans did not think worth much pains to subdue. Adrian visited Britain, and built a new rampart between the Tyne and the Firth of Solway. The Roman province was consequently, at this time, somewhat retrenched in its limits. It was afterward extended by the conquests of Antoninus Pius, and Severus, who carried his arms very far into the north. The details of these expeditions, however important to a Briton, exceed the circumscription of general history.\*

\* The reader will find this first period of British history fully and ably illustrated by Camden, "Romans in Britain ;" and Chalmers in his *Caledonia*, b. i., the Roman Period.



By the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Britain again recovered her liberty. The legions which defended the island were carried over to the protection of Italy and Gaul against the Gothic invaders. The southern Britons did not regain peace by this change, for they were invaded by the Picts and Caledonians, and so degraded and abased was the national spirit by its subjection to the Roman yoke, that the Britons solicited the protection of Rome against their unconquered neighbours. A trifling assistance was all that the state of the empire could afford. The Romans, as a last good office, assisted them in rebuilding the wall erected by Severus, and counselling them to arm manfully in their own defence, they bade a final adieu to Britain about the year 448, after having been masters of a considerable part of the island for nearly four centuries.

The legions had been entirely withdrawn about forty years before this period; and, under the reign of Honorius, Britain was considered an independent country. From that period till the descent of the Saxons in 449, the state of the country, and the nature of the government, can only be matter of conjecture.\*

The character of the southern inhabitants of the island appears at this period to have been extremely despicable; they could not avail themselves of the liberty they had gained by the departure of the Romans. The Picts and Caledonians considered the Southern Britons as a people fitted for slavery. They broke down from their mountains with unresisted fury, and carried havoc and devastation along with them. The Britons, instead of vindicating their rights by a magnanimous opposition, again renewed their abject solicitations to the Romans; but the Goths had given to them too much employment at home to permit

\* See a fine visionary picture of it (acknowledged to be such by the historian himself) in Gibbon, c. xxxi. Decl. and Fall of Rom. Emp.

their sending aid to a distant and useless province. In this extremity, numbers of the Britons fled across the sea into Gaul, and settled in the province of *Armorica*, which from that time became known by the name of Brittany. It was happy for those who remained, that their enemies, the Picts and Caledonians, had too much of the predatory disposition to think of making complete conquests, or securing what they had won. They were satisfied with ravaging a part of the country, and retired again to their mountains. The Britons, in this interval of peace, behaved as if secure of its continuance. They made no preparations for resisting an enemy, whom they might easily have foreseen they would often have to cope with. A new irruption of the Picts and Caledonians totally disheartened them; and, to complete their shame, they sent a deputation into Germany, to invite the Saxons to come to their assistance and protection.

The Saxons were at this time regarded as one of the most warlike tribes of the ancient Germans. They occupied the seacoast from the mouth of the Rhine to Jutland; and had made themselves known to the Britons by piratical expeditions on their coasts. They received this embassy with great satisfaction, and under the command of two brothers, Hengist and Horsa, they landed in the year 450 on the island of Thanet, and immediately marched to the defence of the Britons. The Scots and Picts, unable to resist the valour of these foreigners, were defeated and compelled to retire to the North. The Saxons, as might have been expected, next turned their thoughts to the entire reduction of the Britons. After various and alternate changes of success, the Saxons, having brought over large reinforcements of their countrymen, finally accomplished the reduction of South Britain. Different parts of the country having been subdued by the different leaders, who were each ambitious of independence and absolute authority, the country, even after

its final reduction, which was not till above a century and a half\* after the first landing of the Saxons, exhibited a broken and divided appearance. Seven distinct provinces were formed into independent kingdoms!

The history of the SAXON HEPTARCHY is extremely obscure. The duration of the several kingdoms, till their union under Egbert, is almost all that can be noted with any approach to historical certainty.

The kingdom of Kent began in the year 455, under Escus the son of Hengist, and during the reigns of seventeen princes lasted till the year 827, when it was subdued by the West Saxons. Under Ethelbert, one of the Kentish kings, the Saxons were converted to Christianity. Pope Gregory the Great sent over into Britain the monk Augustine, with forty associates, who very effectually propagated the doctrines of Christianity by their eloquence and the exemplary purity of their morals.

The second kingdom of the Heptarchy is that of Northumberland, which began in the year 547, and lasted, under twenty-three princes, till the year 926. The third was that of East Anglia, which began A. D. 575, and in which, before its union in 928, there reigned fifteen successive princes. The fourth, Mercia, the largest and most powerful of the Heptarchy, comprehended all the middle counties of England. It subsisted from the year 582 to the year 827. The fifth kingdom of the Heptarchy was that of Essex, of which, before its union, there were fourteen princes. Of Sussex, which was the sixth kingdom of the Heptarchy, there were only five princes before it was finally reduced. The seventh, which ultimately subdued and united the whole kingdoms of the Heptar-

\* It is in this period that is placed the reign of King Arthur, prince of the Silures, who achieved many victories over the Saxons, and having signally routed them in the battle of Badenhill, fought A. D. 520, secured the tranquillity of his people for above forty years.

chy, was that of Wessex or the West Saxons. It began in the year 519, and had not subsisted above eighty years, when one of its princes conquered the kingdom of Sussex and annexed it to his dominions.

In the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, there was no exact rule or order of succession; and the reigning chief, considering all the princes of his family as his rivals, was seldom at ease till he had secured himself by putting them to death; hence, and from another cause, which was the passion for a monastic life, the royal families were entirely extinguished in all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and Egbert, prince of the West Saxons, remained at last the sole surviving descendant of the Saxon conquerors who subdued Britain. These were favourable circumstances for the ambition of Egbert, and naturally incited him to attempt the conquest of the whole Heptarchy. The Mercians were at that time the greatest and most powerful of some of these petty kingdoms, and held Kent and East Anglia as tributary states. Some intestine differences facilitated the conquest, and Egbert, after several desperate engagements, reduced them entirely under his authority. Essex was subdued with equal facility. Sussex, we have before remarked, had been very early added to the dominion of the West Saxons. The East Angles submitted of themselves, and craved the protection of the victorious Egbert; and the Northumbrians soon after followed their example.

Thus the whole kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy were united into one great state, nearly four hundred years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, by the victorious arms and judicious policy of Egbert. This great event, which is properly the foundation of the kingdom of England, took place in the year 827.

England, thus united, was soothing herself with the prospect of peace and tranquillity, which, during the contentions of the Heptarchy, she had never enjoyed; but this happiness was yet at a distance. The Nor-

mans, whose devastations had rendered them formidable to the continental kingdoms, now began to show themselves on the coast of England, where they were known by the name of Danes. Their first landing had taken place in the year 787, in the kingdom of Wessex. From that time, for several centuries, England was never free from the ravages of these barbarians; whose invasions became from time to time more formidable, according as resistance exasperated them, or the hopes of plunder allured fresh bands of their countrymen to join in their expeditions.

Under Alfred, the grandson of Egbert, England, from this source alone, was reduced to the lowest extremity. This prince, whose singular endowments of mind were united to great heroism and courage, had for some years, with various success, made the most vigorous efforts to free his country from the scourge of the Danes. In one year, he engaged them in eight battles; and while he flattered himself that he had reduced them to extremity, a new torrent poured in upon the coast, which obliged him to offer proposals of peace. These, though agreed to by the Danes, were not fulfilled; they still continued their depredations, and the Saxons were reduced to such despair, that many left their country, fled into the mountains of Wales or escaped beyond sea. Alfred himself was obliged to relinquish his crown. He concealed himself in the habit of a peasant, and lived for some time in the house of a neatherd. Collecting afterward a few followers, he betook himself to a small retreat in Somersetshire, surrounded by forests and morasses; where he lay concealed for the space of a year, till the news of a prosperous event called him again into the field.

A chief of Devonshire, a man of great spirit and valour, had, with a handful of his followers, routed a large party of Danes, and taken a consecrated or enchanted standard, in which they reposed the utmost confidence. Alfred, observing this symptom of revi-



ving spirit in his subjects, left his retreat; but before having recourse to arms, he resolved to inspect himself the situation of the enemy. Assuming the disguise of a harper, he passed without suspicion into the Danish camp, where his music and drollery obtained him so favourable a reception, that he was kept there for several days, and even lodged in the tent of their prince. Here, having remarked their careless security, their contempt of the English, and their own real weakness, he immediately, by private emissaries, summoned a rendezvous of the bravest of the Saxon nobles, inviting them to appear at Bricton, on the borders of Selwood forest, attended by all their followers. Thither they accordingly resorted in very great numbers. The English beheld with rapture their beloved monarch, whom, from his long absence, they had accounted dead. They were impatient to march under his banner, and Alfred led them immediately to the attack. Their enemies, the Danes, surprised at the sight of a foe whom they looked upon as entirely subdued, made a very feeble resistance, and were put to flight with great slaughter. The English might have entirely cut them to pieces; but the generosity of Alfred inclined him rather to spare and incorporate them with his subjects. He allowed them to settle in the provinces of East Anglia and Northumberland, which the late ravages had almost depopulated, and the Danes, embracing the Christian religion, were united with the English. The more turbulent of them found opportunity to escape beyond sea, where, under the command of Hastings, a notorious plunderer, they prepared themselves for fresh depredations.

Alfred employed this interval of tranquillity in restoring order to the state; in establishing civil and military institutions, and chiefly in equipping a respectable fleet, which had been hitherto totally neglected by the English. These precautions were extremely necessary, for the Danes attempted more than once a new invasion, and committed the most destruc-

tive ravages. At length, after a very complete defeat, and a most exemplary severity, which Alfred now found it necessary to adopt with those whom he took prisoners, these northern pirates suspended for several years their predatory visits to Britain.

England now enjoyed full tranquillity under this excellent prince; and Alfred saw his kingdom in the possession of every happiness which could flow from the salutary laws and institutions which he had established; when he died in the vigour of his age, after a glorious reign of nearly thirty years.

Alfred, whether we view him in his public or private character, deserves to be esteemed one of the best and greatest of princes. He united the most enterprising and heroic spirit with the greatest prudence and moderation; the utmost vigour of authority with perfect affability and a most winning deportment; the most exemplary justice with the greatest lenity. His civil talents were in every respect equal to his military virtues. He found the kingdom in the most miserable condition to which anarchy, domestic barbarism, and foreign hostility could reduce it: by the valour of his arms, and by his abilities as a politician and lawgiver, he brought it to a pitch of eminence and glory, which, till then, England had never attained. The outlines of his admirable plan of political economy merit particular attention, as being, in fact, the foundation of the venerable system of the British Constitution.

Alfred divided all England into counties; these he subdivided into hundreds; and the hundreds again into tithings. Ten neighbouring householders formed a tithing, a fribourg, or decennary, over which one man was appointed to preside, called a tithing-man or borgholder.\* Every householder was answerable for the

\* Borgh, in the Saxon language, according to Spelman, signifies a pledge or security. In these small communities or neighbourhoods, every man was security for the conduct of his neighbour, and hence the origin of the word *neighbour*,

conduct of his family, and the borgholder for the conduct of all within his district. Every man was punished as an outlaw who did not register himself in some tithing; and none could change their habitation without a warrant from the tithingman or borgholder. When any person was accused of a crime, the borgholder was summoned to answer for him; if he declined to become his security, the criminal was committed to prison till trial. If he escaped before trial, the borgholder was subjected to a penalty.

The borgholder, in deciding disputes or small lawsuits, summoned his whole decennary or tithing to assist him. In matters of greater importance, in appeals from the decennary or in controversies arising between members of different decennaries, the cause was brought before the hundred, which consisted of ten decennaries, or one hundred families of freemen; and which was regularly assembled every four weeks for the deciding of causes. Their method of deciding deserves particularly to be noticed as being the origin of juries, that inestimable privilege of Britons. Twelve freeholders were chosen, who, having sworn, together with the presiding magistrate of the hundred, to administer impartial justice, proceeded to the determination of the cause. Besides those monthly meetings of the hundred, there was an annual meeting appointed for the regulation of the police of the district, and for the correction of abuses in magistrates. The people, like their ancestors, the ancient Germans, assembled in arms, whence the hundred was sometimes called a *wapentake*; and these meetings thus served both for the support of military discipline, and for the administration of justice.

Superior to the court of the hundred was the County Court, which met twice a year, after Michaelmas and

quasi Nigh Borgh, or near pledge. Jamieson assigns a different etymology, viz., *Nahgibur*, Germ. from *nach*, near, and *gibur*, inhabitant.—*Etymol. Dict., voce Nichbour.*

Easter, and consisted of all the freeholders of the county. The bishop and aldermen presided in this court, and their business was to receive appeals from the hundreds and decennaries, and decide disputes between the inhabitants of different hundreds. The Alderman formerly possessed both the civil and military authority; but Alfred, judging properly that this gave too much power to the nobility, appointed a sheriff in each county, who enjoyed a like authority with the alderman in his judicial powers. His office was likewise to guard the rights of the crown, and to levy the fines imposed, which at that time formed a very considerable part of the public revenue.

An appeal lay from all these courts to the king himself, in council; and Alfred, in whom his subjects deservedly placed the highest confidence, was overwhelmed with appeals from all parts of the kingdom. The only remedy for this was to reform the ignorance and restrain the corruption of the inferior magistrates, from whence it arose. Alfred, therefore, was solicitous to appoint the ablest and the most upright of his nobility to exercise the office of sheriffs and earls. He punished many for malversation, and he took care to enforce the study of letters, and particularly of the laws, as indispensable to their continuing in office.

Alfred likewise framed a body of laws, which, though now lost, is generally supposed to be the origin of what is termed the common law of England. The institutions of this prince will bring to mind many of the political regulations of Charlemagne, which have been described at some length, and to which those of the Great Alfred bear a very near resemblance.

This excellent prince wisely considered the cultivation of letters as the most effectual means of thoroughly eradicating barbarous dispositions. The ravages of the Danes had totally extinguished any small sparks of learning, by the dispersion of the monks, and the burning of their monasteries and libraries. To repair these misfortunes, Alfred, like Charlemagne, invited

learned men from all quarters of Europe to reside in his dominions. He established schools, and enjoined every freeholder possessed of two ploughs to send his children there for instruction. He is said to have founded, or, at least, to have liberally endowed the illustrious seminary afterward known as the University of Oxford.

His own example was the most effectual encouragement to the promotion of a literary spirit. Alfred was himself, for that age, a most accomplished scholar, and considering the necessary toils and constant active employment, it is surprising how much he employed himself in the pursuits of literature. He is said to have divided his time into three equal parts:—one was allotted to the despatch of the business of government; another to diet, exercise, and sleep; and a third to study and devotion.\* By this admirable regularity of life, he found means, notwithstanding his constant wars, and the care of entirely new modelling and civilizing his kingdom, to compose a variety of ingenious and learned works. He wrote many beautiful apologues and stories in poetry of a moral tendency. He translated the histories of Bede and Orozius, with the treatise of Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*. Alfred, in short, in every view of his character, must be regarded as one of the wisest and best of men that ever occupied the throne of any nation.†

The most complete system of policy which human wisdom can devise must be ineffectual under weak governors and magistrates. The admirable institutions of Alfred were but partially and feebly enforced under his successors; and England, still a prey to the ravages of the Danes, and to intestine disorders, relapsed again into confusion and barbarism.

\* Leland, in his *Collectan*, (cura Hearne, tom. i. 259,) mentions his manner of reckoning time by a candle marked with twenty-four divisions, which always burnt in his study.

† The character of Alfred is admirably described by Carte. — *Hist. of Eng.*, vol. i. b. 4. § 18.



Edward, the son and successor of Alfred, whose military talents bore some resemblance to those of his father, had no share of his political genius. He fought his battles with intrepidity; but unable to take advantage of circumstances, or to secure the order and force of government by a well-regulated administration, his reign was one continued scene of war and tumult, as were those of his successors, Athelstan, Edmund, and Edred. In the reign of the latter prince, the priesthood began first to extend its influence over the minds of the English monarchs, and to concern itself no less in temporal affairs than in spiritual. Dunstan, a fanatical bigot, but sufficiently awake to his own interest and that of the church, ruled everything under Edred, and under his successors Edwy, Edgar, and Edward the Martyr.

Under Ethelred, the successor of Edward, a youth of despicable talents, the Danes began seriously to project the conquest of England. Conducted by Sweyn, king of Denmark, and Olaus, king of Norway, they made a formidable descent upon the island, and, after various successes, compelled the dastardly Ethelred repeatedly to purchase a peace, which they as constantly violated. Ethelred indeed furnished them with strong causes. In the spirit of the weakest and most treacherous policy, he attempted to cut off, by a general massacre, all the Danes that had established themselves in the island. This produced, as might have been anticipated, the redoubled vengeance of their countrymen. At length the English nobility, ashamed of their prince, and seeing no other relief to the kingdom from its miseries, swore allegiance to Sweyn, the Danish monarch; and Ethelred fled into Normandy, where he found protection from Richard, the grandson of the great Rollo, who, as we have already seen, first established his northern followers in that part of France.

Ethelred, upon the death of Sweyn, who did not long enjoy his new dominions, endeavoured to regain

his kingdom; but he found in Canute, the son of Sweyn, a prince determined to make good his father's rights. The inglorious Ethelred died soon after, and left his empty title to his son Edmund, surnamed *Ironside*; who possessed indeed courage and ability to have preserved his country from sinking into such calamities, but wanted talents to raise it from that abyss into which it had already fallen. After several desperate but unsuccessful engagements, he was compelled by his nobility, who urged it as the only means of saving the kingdom, to come to an accommodation with Canute, and to divide the dominions of England by treaty. The Danish prince got Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumberland; and the southern provinces were left to Edmund. But this prince survived the treaty only a few months. He was murdered at Oxford, by a conspiracy of the Danes, who thus made way for the succession of their monarch Canute to the throne of all England.

Edmund Ironside had left two sons, Edwin and Edward; the first measure of Canute was to seize these two princes, whom he sent abroad, to his ally the king of Sweden, with a request that, as soon as they arrived at his court, they might be put to death. Humanity induced the Swedish monarch to spare their lives; he sent them into Hungary, where Solyman, the Hungarian king, gave his sister in marriage to Edwin the elder prince, and his sister-in-law to Edward. Of this last marriage were born two children, Edgar Atheling, and Margaret, afterward spouse to Malcolm Canmore, king of Scotland.

Canute, from the extent of his dominions, was one of the greatest monarchs of the age. He was sovereign of Denmark, Norway, and England. His character, as king of England, was not uniform. He was, in the first years of his reign, detested by his subjects, whom he loaded with the heaviest taxes, and exasperated by numberless acts of violence and oppression. In his latter years, his administration was mild and

equitable, and he courted, in a particular manner, the favour of the church by munificent donations and endowments of monasteries.\* He sustained the glory of his kingdom by compelling Malcolm Canmore to do homage for his possession of Cumberland, which that high-spirited prince had refused to submit to.

Canute left three sons: the eldest, Sweyn, was crowned king of Norway; the youngest, Hardiknute, was in possession of Denmark, and claimed right to England, in virtue of a prior destination of his father, who afterward altered his will, and left that kingdom to his immediate elder brother Harold. A civil war would have ensued between these princes had not the English nobility interfered, and prompted a division of the kingdom. Harold, it was agreed, should have all the provinces north of the Thames, while Hardiknute should possess all to the south.† Emma, widow of Canute, and mother of Hardiknute, had two sons by her former marriage with Ethelred. These princes, Edward and Alfred, had been brought up in Normandy, where their uncle, Robert, duke of Normandy, protected them against the resentment and jealousy of Canute. Harold wished to prosecute his father's purpose of extinguishing the Saxon blood in the posterity of Ethelred. Alfred, one of the princes, was invited to London, with many professions of regard. But Harold had given orders to surprise and murder his attendants, and the prince was led prisoner to a monastery, where he soon after died. Edward, hearing of his brother's fate, fled back into Normandy.

\* "In the latter part of his life, to atone for his many acts of violence, he built churches, endowed monasteries, and imported relics; and had, indeed, a much better title to saintship than many of those who adorn the Roman calendar. He commissioned an agent at Rome to purchase St. Augustine's arm for one hundred talents of silver, a much greater sum than the finest statue of antiquity would then have sold for."—*Grainger's Biog. Hist.*, Class i.

† Carte, *Hist. of Eng.*, vol. i. b. iv. § 31.

Harold did not long enjoy the fruits of his crime, for he died in the fourth year of his reign; and Hardiknute, king of Denmark, betaking himself to England, was acknowledged sovereign of the whole kingdom without opposition. After a violent administration of two years, he died, to the great comfort of his subjects, who now seized the opportunity of entirely shaking off the Danish yoke. The posterity of Edmund Ironside, Edgar Atheling and his sister Margaret, were the true heirs of the Saxon family; but their absence in Hungary, appeared to the English a sufficient reason for giving a preference to Edward, the son of Ethelred, who was fortunately in the kingdom, and the Danes made no attempt to resist the voice of the nation.

Edward, surnamed the Confessor, mounted the throne with the affections of his subjects. He was a mild, but a weak and pusillanimous prince. From his education in Normandy, he had contracted a strong relish for the manners of that people, many of whom attended him into England, and were his particular favourites. His reign was embroiled by the turbulent and factious spirit of Godwin, earl of Wessex, and governor of Kent and Sussex. This nobleman, grounding his hopes upon his extensive authority and wealth, and the imbecility of his sovereign, very early conceived a plan for subverting the government, and assuming absolute power. He attempted an open rebellion in the kingdom, which Edward found no other means of quelling than by coming to an accommodation with the traitor. Godwin died in the interim, and his son Harold, an enterprising youth, while he affected a modest and complying disposition to his sovereign, concealed the same ambitious views. He secured the affections of the nobility, united them to his interests, and succeeding to the immense possessions of his father, he was soon in a condition to make his pretensions formidable to Edward. This prince, then in the decline of life, would

willingly have settled his dominions on his nephew Edgar Atheling, the only remaining branch of the Saxon line, but the imbecility of this young man, he foresaw, would never make good his right against the pretensions of one so popular as Harold, whose views clearly aimed at sovereign power. It appeared to Edward more advisable to nominate for his successor William, duke of Normandy, a prince, whose power reputation, and great abilities, were sufficient to support any destination which he might make in his favour.\*

This celebrated prince was the natural son of Robert, duke of Normandy, by the daughter of a furrier of Falaise. Illegitimacy, in those days, was accounted no stain, and his father left him, while yet a minor, heir to his whole dominions. He had to struggle with an arrogant nobility, several of whom even advanced claims to his crown; but he very early showed a genius capable of asserting and vindicating his rights, and soon became the terror both of his rebellious subjects and of foreign invaders. He reduced his patrimonial dominions to the most implicit obedience; and, through the whole of his life, he seems to have regarded it as a fixed maxim, that inflexible rigour of conduct was the first duty and the wisest policy of a sovereign.

William paid a visit to England; and Edward, receiving him with all the regard due to the relationship that subsisted between them, and to the character of so celebrated a prince, gave him to understand that he intended him for his successor. His return to Normandy, however gave the ambitious Harold an opportunity for the prosecution of his schemes. He continued to extend his influence among the nobility, by the most insinuating address, and it is not improbable that the rigid severity of the character of William, to which the manners of Harold formed so strong a

\* Carte, vol. i. b. iv. § 39.



contrast, contributed to the success of his pretensions.

Edward died in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, and Harold had so well prepared matters, that he took possession of the throne with as little disturbance as if had succeeded by the most undisputed title.

Thus ended the line of the Saxon monarchs in England. The duke of Normandy, on receiving intelligence of the accession of Harold, resolved to assert his claims in the most effectual manner. He used the formality of first summoning that prince to resign his possession of the kingdom, but his summons was answered by a spirited declaration from Harold, that he would defend his right with the last drop of his blood. The preparations made by William for an invasion of England occupied a considerable length of time, and were proportionally formidable. The fame of so great an enterprise, in an age of adventure, excited many of the nobility throughout the different kingdoms of Europe to repair with their followers to his standard. The counts of Anjou and Flanders encouraged their subjects to engage in the expedition, and even the court of France, though evidently contrary to its interest to contribute to the aggrandizement of so dangerous a vassal, increased the levies of William with many of the chief nobility of the kingdom. Harold Halfager, king of Norway, undertook to favour the expedition, by making a landing with a formidable army in one quarter, while William invaded the island in another. The Emperor Henry IV. of Germany engaged to protect the dominions of Normandy in the absence of its prince; and the pope, Alexander II., gave his sanction to the enterprise, by pronouncing Harold a usurper, and directing a sentence of excommunication against all who should adhere to his interest.

William had now assembled an army of sixty thousand men, of whom fifty thousand were cavalry; and a fleet amounting it is said, to three thousand vessels

great and small. The attack was begun by the Norwegian army under Halfager, who entered the Humber with three hundred sail. The Norwegians, in the first engagement, defeated and put to flight an English army, under Morcar, earl of Northumberland, and Edwin, earl of Mercia, the brothers-in-law of Harold, who, in the meantime, collecting a formidable force, revenged this loss by the total rout and dispersion of the army of Halfager. This victory, though honourable to Harold, was the immediate cause of his ruin; he lost many of his bravest officers in the action, and disgusted the rest by refusing to distribute the Norwegian spoils among them.

William the Norman had, in the meantime, landed at Pevensey on the coast of Sussex. The best politicians of the court of Harold endeavoured to dissuade that prince from hazarding an immediate action. It would have been unquestionably his wisest plan to have waited the relaxation of the first ardour of the Normans; to have harassed them by skirmishes, and cut off their provisions, which, in the end, must in all probability have given the English a complete victory. But the ardour of Harold could not brook delay; he hastened with impetuosity to a general engagement, on which depended the fate of his kingdom; and in the memorable battle of Hastings, which was fought (October 14, 1066) on both sides with desperate courage from the morning till the setting of the sun, the death of Harold, and the total discomfiture of his army, after some ineffectual struggles of further resistance, placed William, duke of Normandy, in possession of the throne of England.

## CHAPTER VI.

## . On the Government, Laws, and Manners of the Anglo-Saxons.

THE period of British history to which we are now arrived may be properly concluded by some reflections on the government and manners of the Anglo-Saxons, as there are several particulars in the structure of that government, and in the policy of this ancient people, which are supposed to have had their influence on the British constitution, such as we find it at present, and are topics from which speculative men and political writers have not unfrequently drawn conclusions applicable to our own times, and the present system of government.

The Saxons, who enjoyed the same liberty with all the ancient Germans, retained that political freedom in their new settlements to which they had been accustomed in their own country. Their kings, who were no more than the *chiefs* of a clan or tribe, possessed no greater authority than what is commonly annexed to that character in all barbarous nations. The chief, or king, was the first among the citizens, but his authority depended more on his personal abilities than on his rank. "He was even so far considered as on a level with the people, that a stated price was fixed on his head, and a legal fine was levied on his murderer; which, although proportioned to his station, and superior to that paid for the life of a subject, was a sensible mark of his subordination to the community."\*

A people, in this period of society, it is not to be imagined would be very strict in maintaining a regular succession of their princes. Although the family of the prince had its respect and acknowledged superior-

\* Hume, Appendix I., of which the following account of the Anglo-Saxon government is an abridgment.

ity, there was no rule steadily observed with regard to succession to the throne, which was generally regulated by present convenience, always paying the first attention to the progeny of the last monarch, if any of them was of age and capacity for government. In the case of minors, the succession generally took a collateral turn: an uncle was promoted to the government, and, having children himself, the sceptre, at his demise, often went to his descendants, to the exclusion of the elder line. All these changes, however, required the concurrence, or, at least, the tacit acquiescence of the people. Thus the monarchies were not, strictly speaking, either *elective* or *hereditary*; and though, in some instances, the destination of a prince was followed in the choice of his successor, they can as little be regarded as properly testamentary. The suffrages of the states sometimes conferred the crown, but they more frequently recognised the person whom they found established, provided he was of the blood royal. Our knowledge of the *Anglo-Saxon* history and antiquities, though much the subject of research, disquisition, and controversy, is, after all, too imperfect to afford us means of determining, with any certainty, the prerogatives of the crown and privileges of the people, or of giving any accurate delineation of their government. This uncertainty must result in a great measure, from their political system being actually various in the different kingdoms of the Heptarchy; and, likewise, from its undergoing changes and alterations during the course of six centuries, from the *Saxon invasion* to the *Norman conquest*.

One great feature, common to all the kingdoms of the *Heptarchy*, we know, was the *national council*, called the *Wittenagemot*, or assembly of the wise men, whose consent was requisite for enacting laws, and for ratifying the chief acts of public administration. The preambles to all the laws of the Saxon monarchs still remaining, leave no doubt as to the existence of this council; but who were its constituent members is a

matter of considerable uncertainty. The *bishops* and *abbots* were unquestionably an essential part; and it is as certain that this supreme court regulated both ecclesiastical and civil matters. It likewise appears that the *aldermen*, or (what was a synonymous term,) the *earls* and governors of counties, had a seat in this assembly; but the doubt is whether the commons had any place there, or who were those *wites*, or wise men, who are mentioned as discriminated from the prelates and from the nobility. This is a point which the factions of modern times have chosen to take up and dispute with as much acrimony as if it materially interested us under the present constitution to settle with precision what it was a thousand years ago. The monarchical party affirm that these *wites*, or wise men, were judges, or men learned in the laws. The advocates for the rights of the people hold them to have been the representatives of boroughs, or, what we now call Commons. Perhaps the truth lies between these opinions. As the idea of representation is too refined for a very rude system of government, the most rational opinion seems to be, that the *wites*, or *sapientes*, were such men of fortune, landholders, as fell neither under the denomination of clergy nor nobility, but whose weight and consequence was such as to entitle them, without any election, to compeer at the assembly of the states, and to assist at their deliberations. Whether there was any requisite extent of land, that was understood to bestow this qualification, is altogether uncertain.

One thing undoubted, with regard to the Anglo-Saxon government, is that it was extremely aristocratical. The royal authority was very limited; the people as a body were of little weight or consideration. After the abolition of the Heptarchy, the noblemen, who resided at a distance in the provinces, where the inspection and influence of the king would but very improperly extend itself, must naturally have acquired almost the whole power and authority. The great



offices, too, which they enjoyed became, in a manner, hereditary in their families; and the command of the military force of the province, which it was necessary to give them from the continual danger of foreign invasion from the Danes, would naturally very much increase the power of the nobles. Another circumstance, productive of the same consequence, was the imperfection of the administration under a ferocious and military people, which contributed much to introduce that strong connexion of clientship which we find subsisting in all nations in a similar state of society. Even the inhabitants of towns placed themselves under the protection of some particular nobleman, and feeling the ties of that connexion more strongly than any other, were accustomed to look up to his patronage as that of a sovereign. The laws even favoured these ideas. A client, though a freeman, was supposed so much to belong to his patron, that his murderer was obliged to pay a fine to the latter, as a compensation for his loss, in like manner as he paid a fine to the master for the murder of a slave. Many of the inferior rank of citizens entered into associations, and subscribed a bond, obliging themselves to be faithful to each other in all cases of danger to any one of the confederates; to protect his person, to revenge his wrongs, to pay the fines which he might incur through accident, and to contribute to his funeral charges. This last practice, as well as the connexion of client and patron, are strong proof of the imperfection of laws, and of a weak administration. Only to remedy such evils would men have recurred to these connexions and associations.

The Saxons were divided, as all the other German nations, into *three* ranks of men, the *noble*, the *free*, and the *slaves*. The nobles were called *thanes*, and these were of two kinds—the *king's thanes*, and the *lesser thanes*. The latter seem to have been dependant on the former, and to have received lands, for which they either paid rent or military services. There

were two laws of the Anglo-Saxons, which breathe a spirit very different from what one would naturally expect from the character of the age, when the distinction of superior and inferior is commonly very strongly marked. One of the laws of Athelstan declared, that a merchant who had made three long sea voyages on his own account was entitled to the quality of thane; and another declared that a *ceorle*, or husbandman, who had been able to purchase five hides of land, or five plough-gates, and who had a chapel, a kitchen, a hall and a bell, was entitled to the same rank. The freemen of the lower rank, who were denominated *ceorles*, cultivated the farms of the thanes, for which they paid rent, and they appear to have been removable at the pleasure of the thane.

The lowest and most numerous of the orders was that of the slaves or *villains*; of these slaves there were two kinds, the household slaves, and those employed in the cultivation of the lands: of the latter species are the serfs, which we find at this day in Poland, in Russia, and in others of the northern states. A master had not, among the Anglo-Saxons, an unlimited power over his slaves. He was fined for the murder of a slave, and if he mutilated one, the slave recovered his liberty.

The laws of Edgar inform us that slavery was the lot of all prisoners taken in war. From the continual wars that subsisted, first between the Saxons and Britons, and afterward between the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy, this class of men could not have failed to be numerous.

Though the Anglo-Saxon government seems, upon the whole, to have been extremely aristocratical, there were still some considerable remains of the ancient democracy of the Germans. The courts of the Decennary, the Hundred, and the County, were well calculated to defend general liberty, and to restrain the power of the nobility. In the county courts, or *shire-motes*, the free-holders were convened twice a year,

and received appeals from the inferior courts. The cause was determined by a majority of voices; and the bishop and alderman, who sat as presidents, had no more to do, than to collect the suffrages and deliver their own opinion. An appeal lay from all the courts to the king, but this was not practised unless in matters of importance. The alderman received a third of the fines that were levied in these courts, and the remaining two-thirds went to the king, which formed no inconsiderable part of the crown's revenue. As writing was little practised in those ages, the most remarkable civil transactions were finished in presence of these courts, such as the promulgation of testaments, the manumission of slaves, and the concluding of all important bargains and contracts.

The punishments inflicted by the Anglo-Saxon courts of judicature, and the methods of proof employed in causes, were much the same as we have remarked among the other barbarous nations of northern origin. The pecuniary fines for every species of crime, and the modes of proof by the judgment of God, by the ordeal of fire or water, by single combat, or by producing a certain number of evidences named *compurgators*, who swore that they believed the person spoke the truth;—all these we have observed to have been common to the Germanic nations, and to those of Scandinavian origin, except, as we have before remarked, the Visigoths and Ostrogoths.

As to the military force of the nation during the government of the Saxons, we know that the expense and burden of defending the state lay equally upon all the land; and it was usual for every five hides, or ploughs, to furnish one man for the service.\* The

\* The hide of land has been generally supposed equal to two hundred acres; but, from the use of the word in Domesday Book, there is reason to believe that the hide was no certain measure of land, but as much land as, according to its quality, was supposed to be of a certain value. This value, there is room to think, was about twenty Norman shillings.

ceorles, or husbandmen, were provided with arms, and obliged to take their turn in military duty. There were computed to be two hundred and forty-three thousand six hundred hides in England: consequently the military force of the kingdom consisted of forty-eight thousand seven hundred and twenty men, though, upon extraordinary occasions, there is no doubt that a greater number might be assembled.

The king's revenue consisted partly in his *demesnes*—which were extensive—partly in the tolls and imposts on boroughs and seaports, and a share of the fines imposed by the courts of judicature. The *Dane-gelt*, which is often mentioned, was a land-tax imposed by the state, either for the payment of sums exacted by the Danes, or for the defence of the kingdom against them.

The law of succession among the Anglo-Saxons was, that the land was equally divided among all the male children of the deceased, which was called the custom of *Gavel-kind*. Lands were chiefly of two kinds, *Book-land*—or what was held by charter or book, which was regarded complete property; or *Folk land*—what was held by tenants removable at the pleasure of the proprietors.

Upon the whole, the Anglo-Saxons seem to have been a rude, unlettered, uncivilized people, among whom laws, of themselves imperfect, had yet more imperfect and limited influence. Their national character merits little other praise than that of hardiness and courage, which too often degenerated into ferocity. They were unquestionably behind the *Normans* in every point of civilization, and the conquest was to them a real advantage, as it put them in a situation to receive slowly the seeds of cultivation, and some knowledge in the arts and sciences, of which, till then, they were almost totally ignorant.





